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JUNE 2024 | No 15

Policy Paper

The 18th SDG? Democracy, Development and International Assistance

ÉDITIONS AFD AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

Contents

Introduction

In 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda begins with a common vision describing the various characteristics of a universally desirable world, in particular "one in which democracy, good governance and the rule of law as well as an enabling environment at national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger." However, in the 17 objectives and 169 targets of this 2030 Agenda, democracy, unlike all the other characteristics of the common vision, is no longer mentioned. Has an 18th development goal been lost along the way? Or perhaps an enhanced Goal 16, as it refers to good governance and the rule of law, but without however a democratic target.

This absence of democracy among the universal development objectives is the central theme of this research paper which, based on a selective and sequenced inventory of relevant knowledge, questions the role of democracy in development and development assistance through a historical perspective. It concludes with elements of reflection on the future.

The document is divided into three separate sections focusing, respectively, on the themes of "the universality of democracy", "the links between democracy and development", and "the place of support for democracy in development institutions".

On such broad themes, the question of the perspective to adopt and the selection of the literature to consider was obviously raised. In particular, only studies and research of a global nature were selected: the plethora of analyses on specific political and geographical contexts are not included in this analysis.

The first section on democracy looks exclusively at political regimes in countries around the world. It focuses on analyses to characterize and assess these democratic regimes, and subsequently looks at the development of democracy around the world, with an emphasis on the recent period.

The second section examines, in particular through a historical perspective, the various theories that have sought to bring about a convergence between development and democracy,

and their statistical testing. This link between democracy and development is also discussed based on the narrow economic dimension of the notion of development, as well as its broader dimension.

The third section on the global linkages between Official Development Assistance and democracy is somewhat different. There is less literature on this issue, or it is rather less often a focus. More specifically, the relevant literature identified firstly mostly focuses on a "consideration of politics in development action" and, secondly, on "human rights in development". These analyses, as well as a few studies directly addressing the issue of the promotion of democracy by development institutions, have allowed for a review of this issue, with insight on the trends for the future.

1. Electoral democracy: a universal model?

1.1 – Diversity and complexity of democracy

1.1.1 – The electoral process as the bedrock of national democratic regimes

There is no consensual and stable definition of democracy, either at the level of political science, or at the institutional level. While some of its constituent elements are addressed, for example, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,[1] there is no explicit definition per se of what would be "a" democracy or a democratic regime. Democracy is an abstract, multidimensional and contested concept:

- An abstract concept of "government of all" or "power of the people", depending on the etymological roots of the word "democracy", which some characterize as "government by discussion",[2] sometimes extended to "government by rational and free discussion among legally equal citizens" (Schudson & Girard, 2012), or another form of "collective experience conducted by citizens through an informed dialogue[3]
- A multidimensional concept, firstly because no single criterion can alone define democracy and, secondly, because it applies to multiple fields and levels. For example, we refer to local democracy, commons democracy, digital or health democracy, social or corporate democracy, and increasingly climate democracy. One characteristic of the concept of "democracy" is that it is very often linked to a qualifier permitting multiple variations forming as many models (Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Hidalgo, 2008)
- Finally, a concept "essentially contested", "concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users", according to Gallie (1955, p. 169), in particular in terms of the diversity of its forms, its version as a Western model,[4] and the questioning around its universal scope as shown, for example, by the debate on "Asian values".

David Graeber warns of the need for caution when using the term democracy in a general sense:

> "*If democracy is simply a matter of communities managing their own affairs through an open and relatively egalitarian process of public discussion, there is no reason why egalitarian forms of decision-making in rural communities in Africa or Brazil should not be at least as worthy of the name as the constitutional systems that govern most nation-states today.*"
> (Graeber, 2005, p. 43).

However, if we confine ourselves to democracy as describing a political regime of government in any given State, which will be our framework throughout this analysis, the definition of a minimum common core of characteristics that a regime must possess to enable a "government of all" becomes more understandable. In this respect, following the seminal work of Joseph Schumpeter (Schumpeter, 1942),[5] the literature identifies

[1] In this respect, Article 29 states that "(...) everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society." (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

[2] The term "Government by discussion" was popularized by Walter Bagehot, an English journalist and economist from the 19th century (Bagehot, 1873). It would appear to have originally been attributed to John Stuart Mill (Ford, 1970). Amartya Sen used it in the form of "Government through discussion" in his book Collective Choice and Social Welfare (A. Sen, 2018).

[3] Definition attributed to the psychologist and philosopher John Dewey (Dewey, 1916).

[4] In this respect, it may be questioned whether modern democracy is defined on the basis of a set of Western cultural and geographical values or, conversely, whether it might be democracy itself that embodies the concept of the West, in which Japan and South Korea are generally included, and increasingly Israel and even Chile.

[5] Joseph Schumpeter defined a model of minimal electoral democracy which has since constituted a "canonical" model. He adopts an approach that he describes as "realistic", in opposition to the "unrealistic" concepts of conventional theories that attribute excessive organizational and decision-making capabilities to individuals and the collective. The Schumpeterian model of democracy depends on two criteria relating to the choice of governors: the freedom of choice of politicians by the governed and the non-permanence of governments (Schumpeter, 1942, [2013]). Schumpeter proposes the following definition: "The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals." (Schumpeter, 1942, [2013], p. 269). This definition highlights the procedural nature of democracy, as an "institutional arrangement" governing political decisions for which power is attributed by popular vote.

electoral processes as the best placed to take on this role in terms of the minimum qualification criteria of a democratic regime. While we should in no instance reduce democracy to a simple procedure for the election of representatives, there are however no alternative democratic models at State level dispensing with such a procedure.[6]

However, the mere existence of an electoral procedure is not sufficient to qualify democracy. More restrictive criteria must be used on the conditions in which citizens exercise their choice to define and characterize an electoral democracy. In this respect, there is consensus on the "polyarchy" model developed by Robert Dahl (Dahl, 1998). The Dahlian polyarchy includes six institutional guarantees that characterize "full and complete" electoral democracy: the election of leaders by the people, the frequency and freedom of elections, freedom of expression, free access to diversified and free information, freedom of association and inclusive citizenship (Dahl, 1998).

1.1.2 – The plurality of democratic models

Beyond this minimal and almost consensual conception of polyarchy, a diversity of "models of democracy" complete the simply electoral conception of a democratic regime. Skaaning thus identifies six main models of

Table 1 - The seven main models of democracy

	QUESTION	INSTITUTIONS & KEY CHARACTERISTICS
Electoral democracy (minimalist, polyarchy)	Has the government been chosen through open, free and fair elections?	• Free and frequent elections • Accountability of the governing towards the governed
Liberal democracy	Is political power obligated and shared?	• Political checks and balances and power sharing • Civil liberties, rule of law
Participatory democracy	Do ordinary citizens (non-politicians) participate in the decision-making process?	• Civil society participation in decision-making • Local democracy, direct participation in political life
Deliberative democracy	Are political decisions the result of public deliberations?	• Respectful public deliberations • Advisory bodies based on facts • Civil society participation in deliberations
Majoritarian democracy	Does the majority rule apply?	• Concentration of power • Central role of political parties
Consensual democracy	Do political decisions enjoy consensus among citizens?	• Decentralization of power
Egalitarian democracy	Do citizens all have the same arms to participate in political life?	• Equal representation, equal participation, equal protection • Equal distribution of resources without discrimination • Equal access to political decision-making processes

Source: Coppedge et al. (2011); Skaaning (2021).

[6] At this time, there are only five countries in the world that have not seen national elections since 2000: Eritrea, China, Qatar, Saudia Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Rocha Menocal, 2021).

democracy in addition to polyarchy: liberal, participatory, deliberative, majoritarian, consensual and egalitarian democracy (Skaaning, 2021). These models are described in Table 1 on the basis of their main characteristics. These models may be cumulative or mutually exclusive, as shown by the example of liberal democracy, a model that has played a particularly important role in the history of the last two centuries.

According to Habermas (1994), modern democracies are divided between a procedural principle, ensuring the participation of citizens in collective decisions, and a substantive principle, guaranteeing rights and freedoms to each citizen. It is the emphasis on this principle of guaranteeing freedoms which characterizes liberal democracy.

The problem is that these procedural and substantive principles can lead to conflicts:

> *"Liberal democracy is the conjunction of two ideals. The first is that of individual liberty: liberty of thought, speech, religion, and political action; freedom from government interference with privacy, personal life, and the exercise of individual inclination. The second ideal is that of a democratic society controlled by its citizens and serving their needs. To approach either of these ideals is very difficult. To pursue both of them inevitably results in serious dilemmas."* (Nagel, 1975, p. 136, quoted by Di Paola & Jamieson, 2017, p. 390).

Liberal democracy is characterized by the construction of independent institutions that protect rights and freedoms. But these checks and balances (Constitution, independent judiciary, etc.) are by nature built to moderate immediate popular sovereignty. This clearly indicates the potential tension between exclusive democratic models. Consequently, majoritarian democracy (which may lead to a form of "tyranny of the majority", in the words of Alexis de Tocqueville) appears as a partially exclusive model of liberal democracy. It may even be incompatible with another democratic form of consensual democracy.

In contrast, egalitarian democracy appears as a model that is complementary and additional to liberal democracy, as it adds the guarantee of social rights (for example, for a minimum income, education, health and housing)

Table 2 - Cumulative conception of models of democracy

	COMPETITIVE ELECTIONS	UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND POLITICAL FREEDOMS (massive suffrage right, political freedom without discrimination)	CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (property rights, freedom of religion, freedom of movement)	SOCIAL RIGHTS
Minimalist democracy	+			
Polyarchy	+	+		
Liberal democracy	+	+	+	
Egalitarian democracy	+	+	+	+

Source: Skaaning (2021).

to the freedoms defended by the latter (in addition to the electoral process base). We can thus see that a cumulative logic can exist between the various models of democracy, from a minimalist logic (procedural democracy within the meaning of Schumpeter) to a maximalist logic considering a large number of rights (egalitarian democracy). Table 2 summarizes this logic of accumulation by illustrating the contributions of each model.

1.2 – Measurement of democracy

1.2.1 – Plurality of indices

Due to the plurality of models, the measurement of the "level", "quality" and "achievement" of democracy in a country takes various forms using different methodological perspectives. As with all measurements in social science, and especially in the case of such a complex concept, these democracy indicators are social objects, built through specific cultural, political and social lenses. They can in no way claim to be neutral or objective and must be used accordingly.

The authors from the V-Dem Institute (see below) identify some 14 measurements of democracy, covering more or less extensive periods and geographical areas (Coppedge *et al.*, 2017). They in particular identify five key characteristics in the construction of an index which fundamentally differentiates between them: the data sources, the number and construction of indicators, the quantitative properties (scale, interval and uncertainty), the scope of coverage, and the index impact factor indicating its academic and mediatic influence.

Based on this latter criterion and in view of the indices generally used in comparative literature (Boese, 2019; Vaccaro, 2021), in the box below, we illustrate their four principles, along with the general approach to the construction of these indices.

Box 1. Measurement indices of democracy

Table 3 below provides a general summary of the main characteristics of the principal indices for the measurement of democracy, highlighting the theoretical lens used and specifying four of the five methodological aspects presented by Coppedge et al. (2017). Three of these four indices – "Polity V" (formerly "Polity IV"), the "Freedom in the World Index" and the "V-Dem Democracy Indices" – have academic value and are among the most used in empirical work. The fourth index, the "Democracy Index" produced by "The Economist Intelligence Unit" has more of a political-mediatic resonance, with extensive coverage for each publication released.

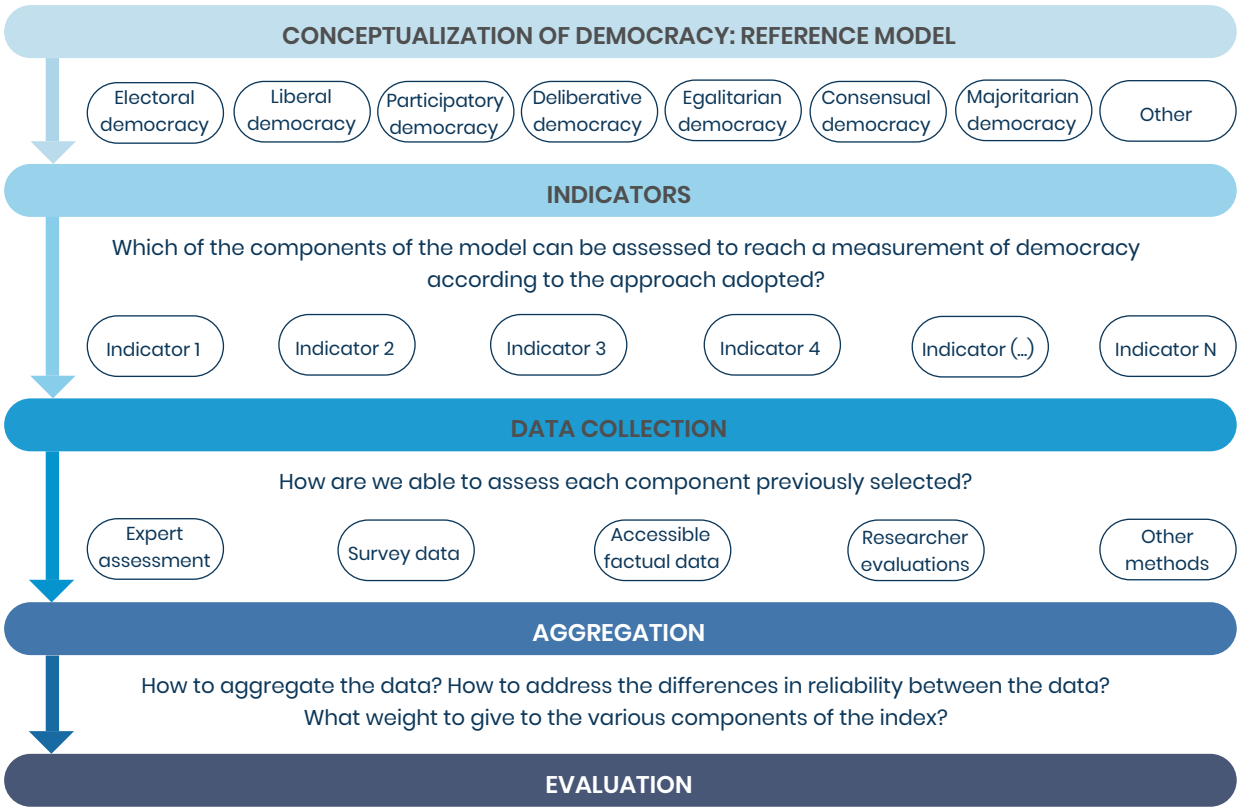
While the characteristics of the systems differ, it is still possible to establish a heuristic summarizing the approach to the construction of the measurement of democracy in five stages: the conceptual definition, the choice of indicators specific to the concept, the collection of data, the aggregation methods, and the final assessment. Figure 1 illustrates the construction process based on these five principles by developing the main elements provided by each stage and the main question that it addresses.

Table 3 - Principal indices measuring democracy around the world

	REFERENCE MODEL	EVALUATION STRATEGY	QUANTIFICATION	SCALE	COVERAGE
Polity V	Electoral and liberal	Researcher evaluations, accessible factual data	Qualitative harmonization of data, reproduction of data by external researchers	-10 to 10	165 countries 1800 - 2018
Freedom in the World	Electoral and liberal	Expert assessments, researcher evaluations, accessible factual data	Qualitative harmonization of data	0 to 100	195 countries 1972-2021
Democracy Index	Liberal democracy	Expert assessments, survey data	Qualitative harmonization of data	0 to 10	165 countries 2006 - 2021
V-Dem Democracy Indices	Electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, egalitarian	Expert assessments, researcher evaluations, accessible factual data	Multi-coder data aggregation model taking the uncertainty of estimates into account	0 to 1	182 countries 1900-2021

Source: For Polity V see Marshall and Gurr (2020); for FIW see Freedom House (2022), for Democracy Index see The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2021); for V-Dem see Coppedge et al. (2022).

Figure 1 - General principles for the construction of democracy indices



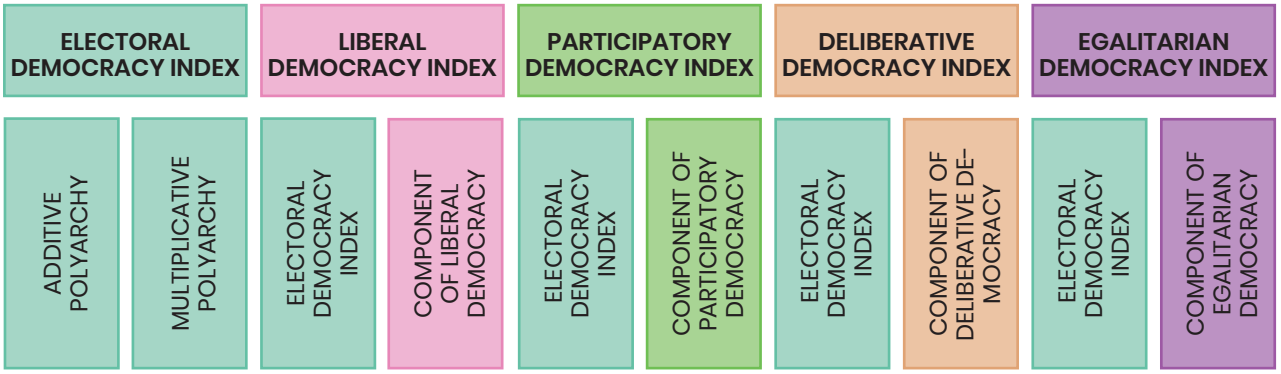
1.2.2 – Focus on V-Dem

Despite the diversity of indicators, a comparison of them tends to show a certain convergence between these indices. The correlation analyses in particular show similarities in the categorization of regimes by these different measurement systems. This is indicative of the coherence of both the historical and regional dynamics between these main measurements (Boese, 2019; Vaccaro, 2021). In addition, among the different systems compared, one measurement, the most used in academia today, would appear to be the most effective through its capacity to grasp the complexities of regimes, its theoretical and empirical exhaustivity, its transparency, and its documentation: the index proposed by the V-Dem Institute, "Varieties of Democracy".

Theoretical exhaustivity refers to the existence of five different measurements that capture five distinct dimensions of democracy: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative and egalitarian. V-Dem opts to consider the models of democracy as mutually exclusive, with the exception of electoral democracy, which is assimilated to polyarchy and informs all the other models. Figure 2 shows the five indices of democracy of V-Dem based on a common component of electoral democracy and a component specific to the model measured. The liberal democracy index is thus composed of the electoral democracy index and a component specific to liberal democracy which captures its main characteristics.

The V-Dem indices are essentially based on data coded by country experts who assess the characteristics of democracy according to ordinal scales. A statistical aggregation model subsequently reflects these assessments through an index from 0 to 1. The V-Dem electoral democracy index is used for the empirical analysis which constitutes the rest of this paper.[7]

Figure 2 - Main indices measured by the V-Dem Institute



Source: Coppedge *et al.* (2022).

[7] For example, in the context of the construction of the liberal democracy index, a country expert must assess the level of freedom of expression of women to build the sub-index of freedom of expression and access to diversified information. To do so, the expert must answer the same standardized question for all countries: "Can women openly discuss political issues in private households and public spaces?". Through documentary research and information gathered from various sources, the answer is ranked on a scale of 0 to 4, 0 being a total absence of freedom of expression for women and 4 full respect for it. Each level is accompanied by an explanation of what the authors of the V-Dem Institute are referring to, for example, level 2 of the freedom of expression of women implies that "expressions of political opinions by women are occasionally exposed to intervention and harassment" (see Coppedge *et al.*, 2022). The coherence of the opinions of the experts is ensured by the multiplicity of viewpoints collected, as a country has a minimum of three experts. The ordinal responses are subsequently transposed to the indices through the use of an aggregation model developed by the authors of the V-Dem Institute which resolves issues of coherence between the experts and enables the integration of estimates on the certainty of the information (Coppedge *et al.*, 2022).

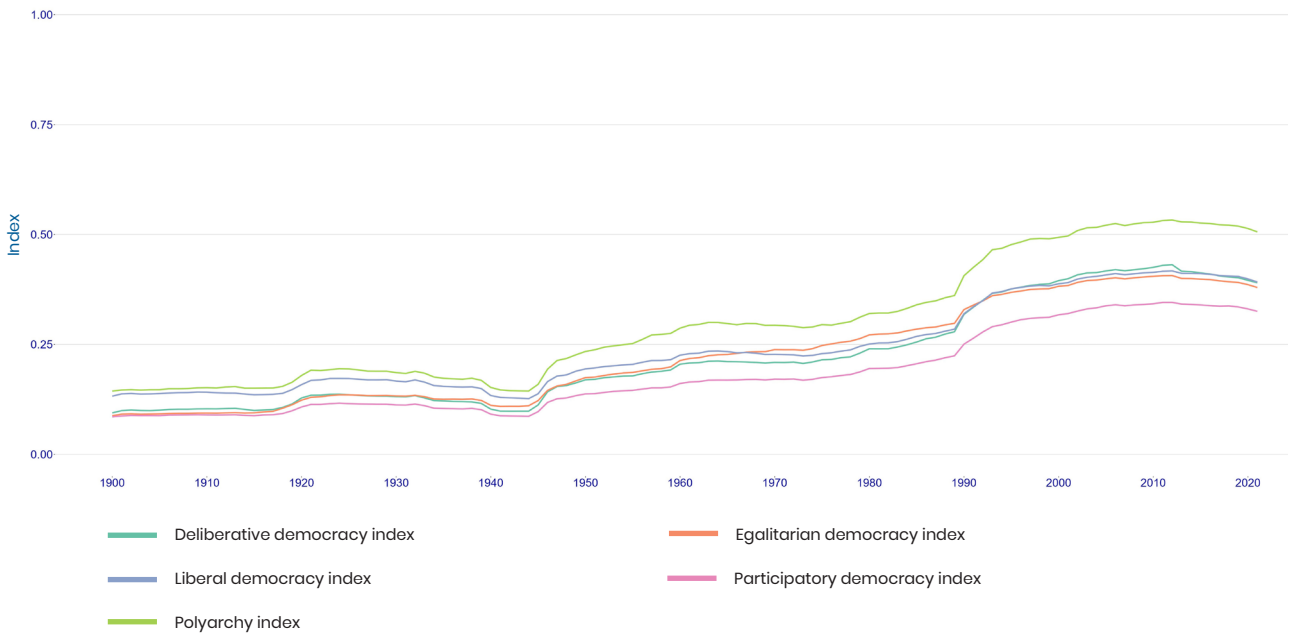
The dataset produced by the V-Dem Institute every year provides a good quality coverage in time and space to envisage research on the observation of long-term trends and to observe specific cases, such as regions and countries. Indeed, the dataset covers more than 180 countries from 1900 to today. It even provides measurements dating back to 1789 for a number of mainly Western countries, those usually referred to as historic "modern democracies". The data are updated annually, with a renewal of indices covering all the countries. They are published with an analytical report taking stock of democracy in the world and identifying the main trends and points of attention.

1.3 – History is far from over[8]

1.3.1 – The microhistory of global democracy

To analyze the evolution of global democracy over a long period, the V-Dem electoral democracy index is mainly used in the following analyses. This may appear to reduce the diversity of definitions and measurements of democracy described in the previous sections. However, from a global macrohistorical perspective, the various measurement systems not only "tell the same story", as analyzed above, but the indices from the V-Dem Dataset measuring the various forms of democracy also follow comparable evolutions. But the electoral democracy index does have higher levels compared to the other more comprehensive forms of democracy, as shown in the figure 3.

Figure 3 - Evolution of the five V-Dem democracy indices from 1900 to 2021



Source: V-Dem Dataset v12.

[8] This title comes in response to Francis Fukuyama who stated in an article published in 1989 entitled "The End of History?" prior to his famous book "The End of History and the Last Man" in 1992 (Fukuyama, 1992): "What we may be witnessing [after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ultimate end of Sovietism] is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 458).

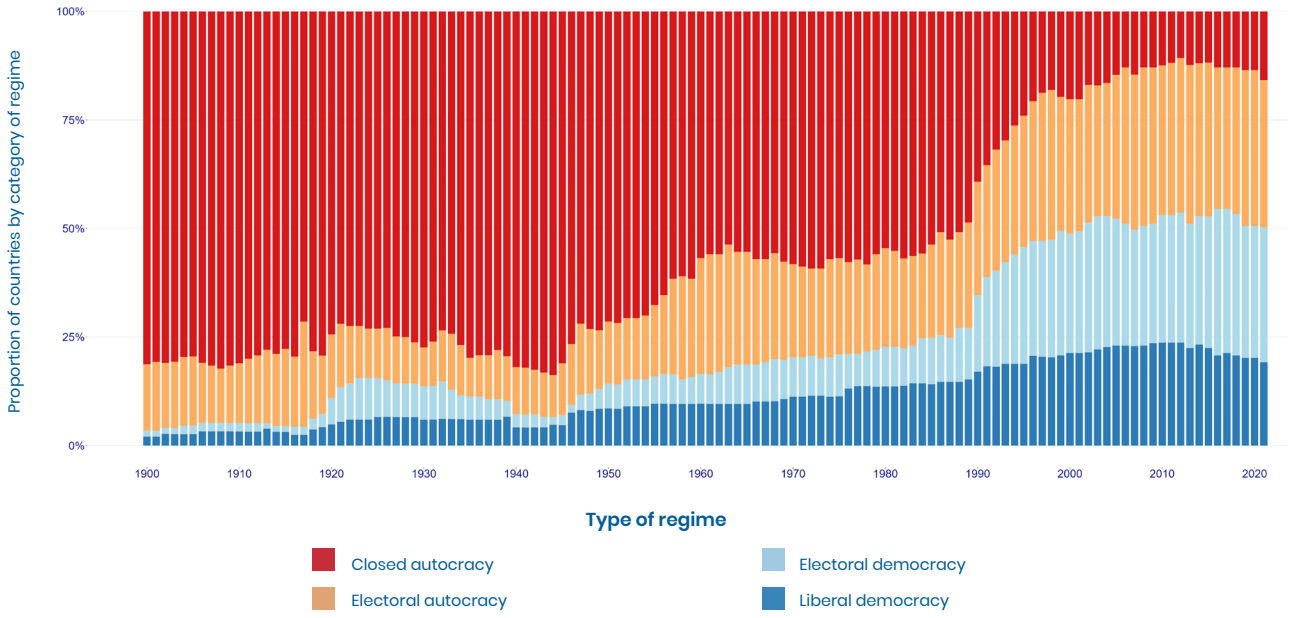
Modern democracy was built from the 19th century onwards and developed in the 20th century with the granting of universal political rights.[9] Based on V-Dem data, the "Regimes of the World" (Lührmann *et al.*, 2018) dataset has classified the various countries of the world into four categories of regime: liberal democracy, electoral democracy, electoral autocracy and closed autocracy. This classification is widely used and clearly illustrates the successive waves of democratic expansion.

There has clearly been progress in global democracy over time, in terms of the proportion of countries and the population concerned and, conversely, the significant decline in closed autocracies. This democratization of the world has largely taken place as a result of major historical events of emancipation and the conquest of freedoms, in particular the extension of voting rights to women, the victory over fascist regimes, the struggles for decolonization, and the fall of Soviet Communism.

According to an analysis popularized by Huntington (1991), there was progress in democracy throughout the 20th century in the form of successive waves which can be clearly seen in Figure 4 (and also less clearly in Figure 5): the first during the first decades of the 20th century, the second from the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1960s, and the third starting in the mid-1970s and accelerating in the 1990s.

Global democratization is a process of deepening, but above all of extension. These three waves have become increasingly globalized. The first mainly concerns a few Western countries. The second, at the end of the Second World War, includes countries in Latin American (Brazil, Costa Rica), Asia (India, Japan, South Korea), and Africa and the Indian Ocean (Ghana, Mauritius), in particular following the decolonization. The third wave initiated in Europe in the 1970s (Portugal, Spain) gradually spread to Latin America (Argentina, Mexico), then took off in Eastern Europe and Africa in the 1990s.

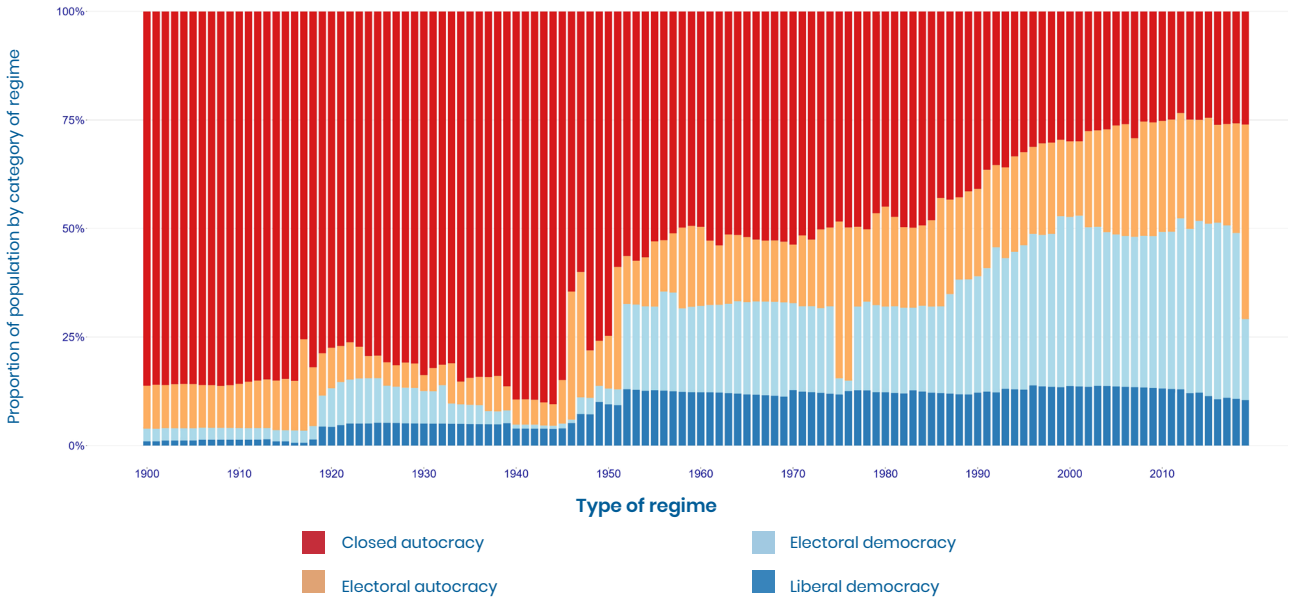
Figure 4 - Evolution of regimes around the world between 1900 and 2021 in terms of countries



Source: Our World in Data, from Lührmann *et al.* (2018).

[9] The first country in the world to extend the right to vote to women was New Zealand in 1893.

Figure 5 - Evolution of regimes around the world between 1900 and 2019 in terms of world population



Source: Our World in Data, from Lührmann *et al.* (2018), authors' calculations.

The term "waves" is used to describe a phenomenon of ebb and flow. Each period of democratic expansion would appear to be followed by a more or less pronounced period of ebbing: in the 1930s with the rise of fascism, in the 1960s with the failure to establish democracy in a number of new independent countries (more visible in Figure 5), and in the 2000s with a sharp and regular rise in autocratization. The latter was such a major and specific reversal that we hesitate between referring to an ebb or rather a democratic backsliding.

1.3.2 – An ebb or a reversal of the trend of democratization?

In 2021, the average index of the electoral democracy facing citizens of the world, as calculated by the V-Dem Dataset, stood at 0.41 on a scale from 0 to 1. This is the same level as in 1989. This means that on average all the democratic progress achieved since the fall of the Berlin Wall has been lost since 2013, the year when the index started to decline. The index is less negative if the average index by country is taken into account, without weighting by national populations, but the trends are the same.

The figure 6 identifies all the countries of the world where democracy has progressed or regressed over time, even marginally.

Caution is needed in interpreting this graph. It might be thought that the reduction in the yellow middle area over time, meaning the number of countries where the electoral democracy index is stable, is primarily due to a statistical effect resulting from a lower sensitivity to the variation of the index for reconstructed data for earlier periods.However, the major phenomenon illustrated by this graph is the recent sharp increase, on the right, in the number of countries where electoral democracy is declining, from a low point in the early 1990s to more than half of the countries in the world in 2021. However, this expansion of democratic backsliding does not detract from the number of countries where democracy is progressing, which has remained high since the third democratic wave.This democratic backsliding can also be seen in both the regimes classified in the democracy categories and those classified as autocracies. It is also completely globalized, showing comparable trends in almost every part of the world.

Figure 6 - Annual variation of scores for electoral democracy around the world between 1901 and 2021

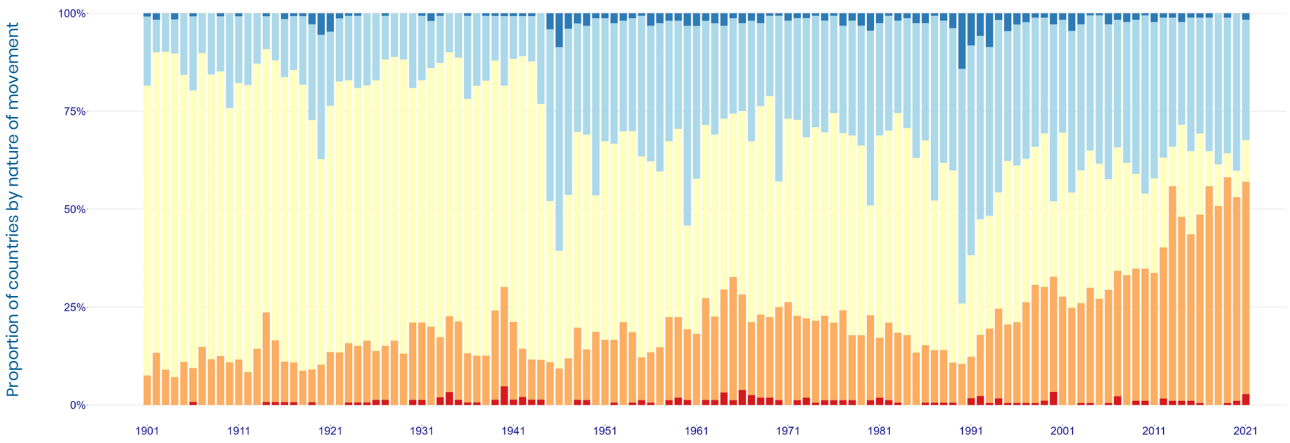
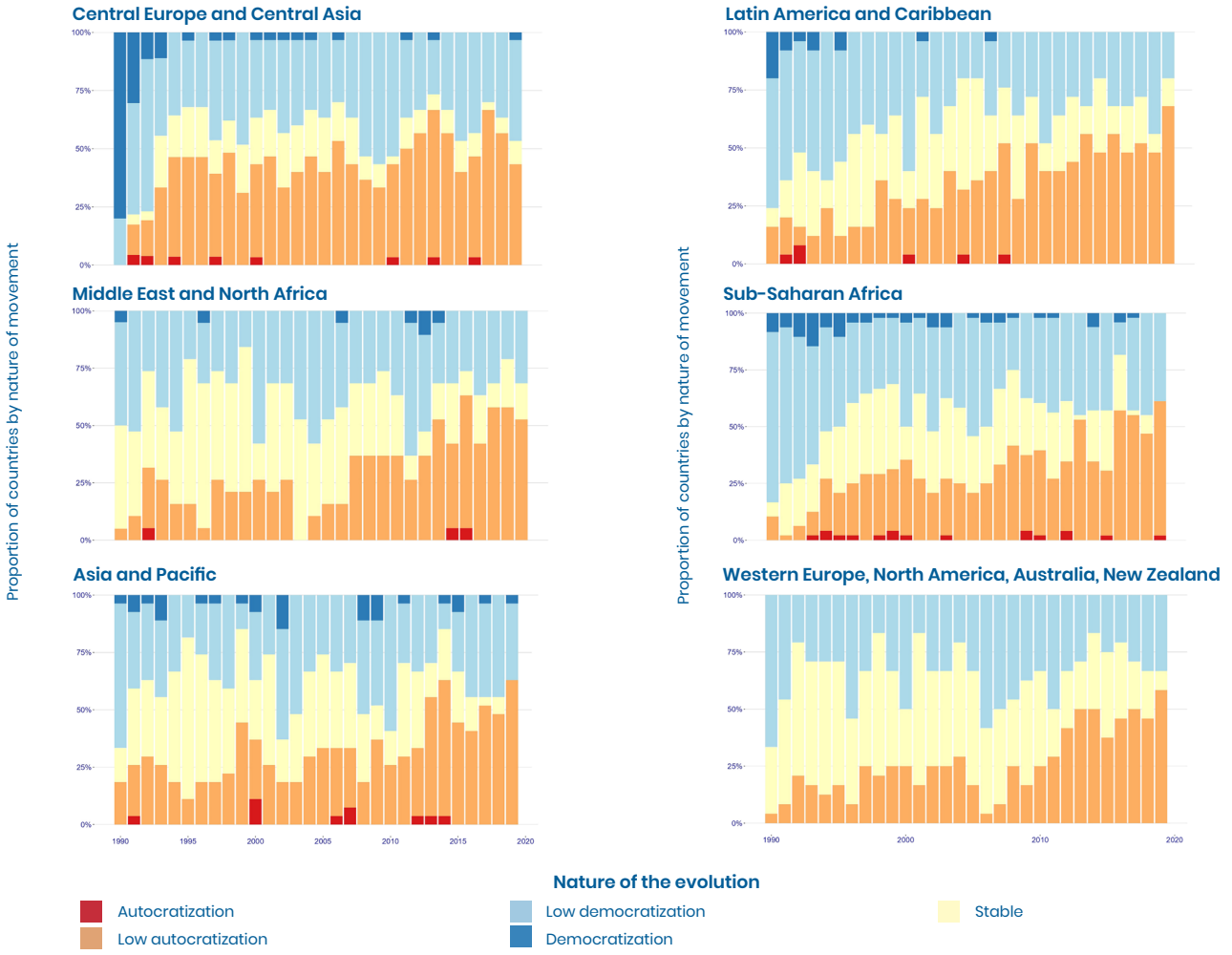
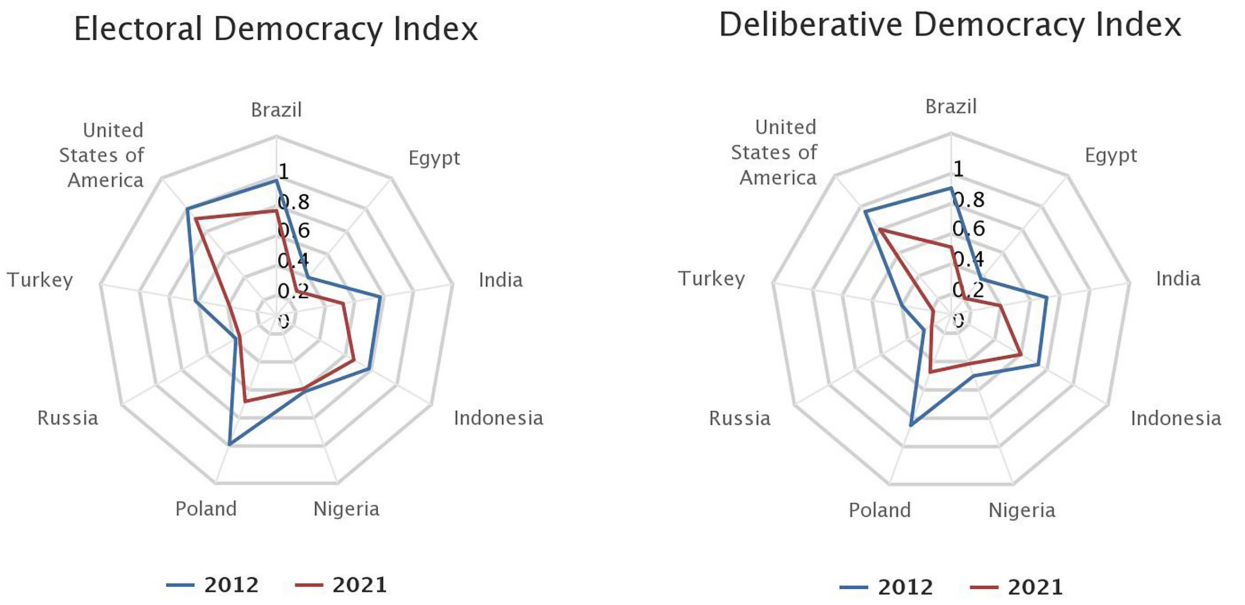


Figure 7 - Evolution of democracy around the world in terms of countries in six parts of the world



Source: V-Dem v12 and authors' calculations. For each country, the annual difference in the electoral democracy index has been calculated, then categorized according to five groups depending on the value of the difference. The group sizes per year have subsequently been counted and represented in relative values compared to the number of countries. Democratization (compared to Autocratization) implies an annual increase (compared to a decline) in the electoral democracy score of between 0 and 10% (exclusively). Stability implies no annual variation.

Figure 8 - Electoral and deliberative democracy indices in nine "major countries" in 2012 and 2021



The democratic backsliding is not only globalized, it also affects each continent with major countries in terms of their population and/or geopolitical role, for example, as shown by the representation below (Figure 8).

Moreover, we can see that while the electoral democracy index sometimes declines slightly or very slightly in certain countries, there are more significant declines in the more "comprehensive" measurements of democracy, such as deliberative democracy, in the graph above.

1.3.3 – Democratic erosion

This phenomenon of democratic backsliding has several characteristics. The first is that it is often gradual, hence the often used term "democratic erosion" (Cerny, 1999).

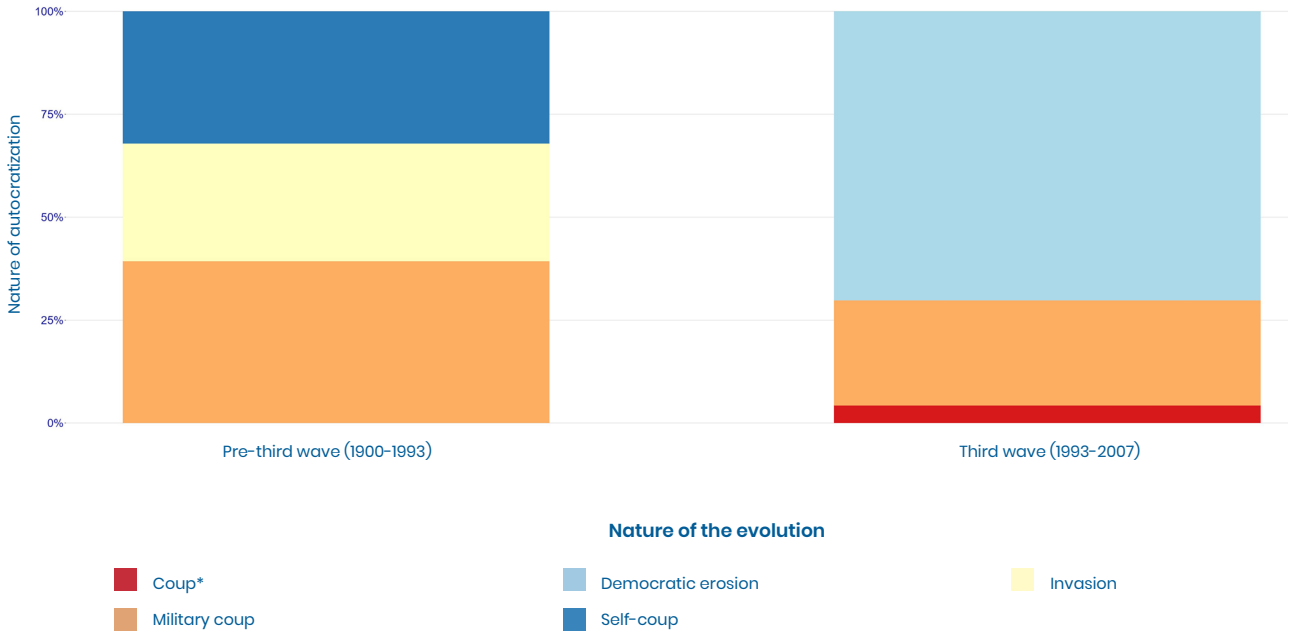
Using the V-Dem Dataset and its electoral democracy index, Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) have identified all the episodes of autocratization around the world between 1900 and 2017.[10] They determine that democratic erosion began in 1990, characterized by its progressive nature, and has become the main model of episodes of autocratization.

While the results of this comparison need to be tempered, by observing the fact that for the post-2020 years, the sudden episodes of autocratization in the form of coups and self-coups[11] would appear to have reemerged (Burkina Faso, Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan, Tunisia), the fact remains that gradual democratic backsliding is a modern phenome-non, characteristic of the 21st century. Democratic erosion in particular applies to certain components of democracy.

[10] They have considered that an episode of autocratization was a continuous period of deterioration in the democratization index with a total value of at least 0.1. A period of autocratization begins with an annual degradation of at least 0.02 and ends either after four consecutive years of stagnation in the index, or after a year where the improvement is at least equal to 0.02.

[11] A self-coup is a form of autocratization in which a Head of State takes power by legal means and the democratic regime subsequently shifts towards autocracy by locking down institutions. The most symbolic example of a self-coup is the accession to power of Hitler in 1933 then the advent of the Third Reich.

Figure 9 - Nature of episodes of autocratization before and after 1990



Source: Lührmann and Lindberg (2019). *The episodes of autocratization in Libya (2014-2017) and Ukraine (2010-2015) do not amount to military coups in the conventional sense. The situation in Libya is more similar to a situation of anarchy, and in Ukraine a popular revolution. However, the authors have included these two situations in the generic "coup" category.

Figure 10 - Evolution of the components of electoral democracy for the 2000s and 2010s

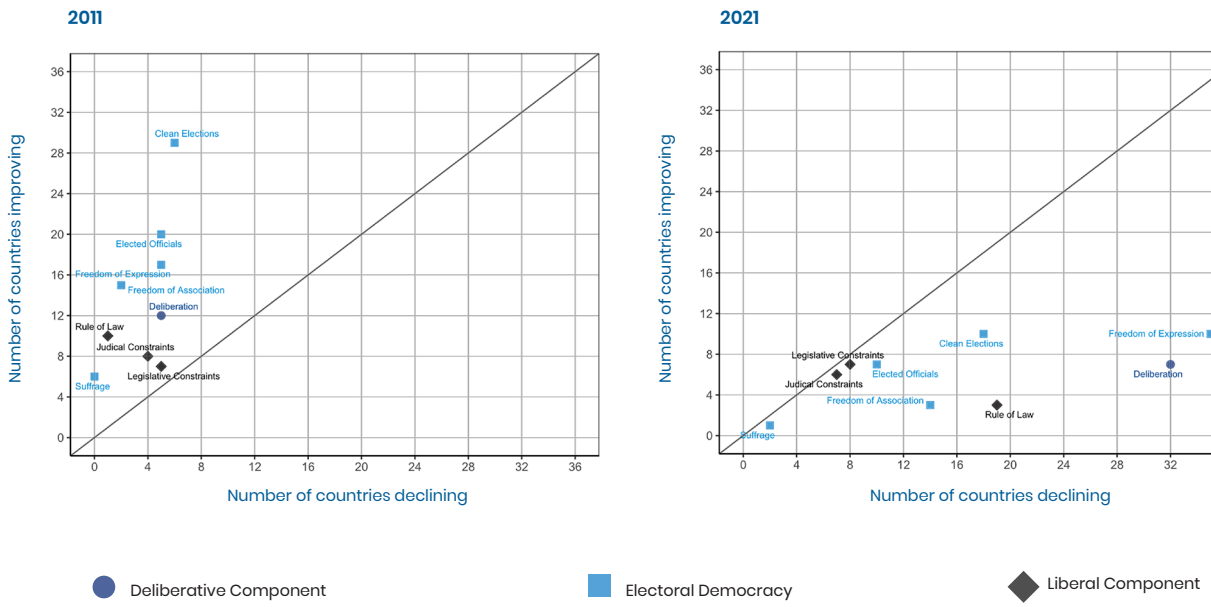


Figure 10, taken from the V-Dem Annual Report 2022 (Boese *et al*., 2022) shows, for 2001-2011 (left scale) and 2011-2021 (right scale), the various components of the V-Dem electoral democracy index, according to the number of countries in the world where these components have declined or increased. The contrast between the two decades is striking: for all the components, the number of countries where they increased exceeds the number where they declined in 2001-2011, and there is the exact opposite situation for the following decade.

Furthermore, the most significant evolutions are not for the same components. For the first decade of the century, the most marked positive evolutions can be seen with the components based on electoral processes. In the last decade, the two dimensions which have declined the most are freedom of expression, impeded by a rise in authoritarian efforts to control information, and deliberation (see also Figure 8 on the decline in deliberation), meaning the ability to debate collective decisions through a peaceful exchange of reasoned arguments. The quality of electoral processes is significantly less affected and, in all cases, at a later stage.

Democratic erosion partly takes place from above, meaning through authoritarian decisions by leaders, with a tendency towards the return of "strongmen" who affect democratic practice, and first and foremost freedom of expression and sometimes freedom of association. But democracy is also eroded from the inside, through the decline of democratic values and practices within the societies concerned.

The analysis of the polarization of societies, initially built through the observation of American society (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), has been extended to numerous societies (Gidron et al., 2019) and become one of the most debated issues in political science today. "Affective polarization", which refers to the degree of hostility which gradually becomes embedded between the different political camps in a given country, is thought to be the cause of the deterioration in the quality of information and public debate. It leads to a decline in democratic standards (Kingzette *et al*., 2021), such as the neutrality of the administration, for example, and, exacerbated by the new communication tools, affects decision-making processes through deliberation (Orhan, 2022).

More fundamentally, democratic backsliding is thought to be linked to a decline in values associated with democracy. For more than 40 years, the World Value Survey has been questioning citizens in various countries of the world about their values. The person behind these surveys, Ronald Inglehart, has defined two "lines of cultural change" which have accompanied democratic expansion: the first one which shifts from traditional-religious values towards secular-rational values, the second from survival values (safety, identity) towards self-expression values (individualism, confidence, freedoms) (Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). Yet, over the last decade, the surveys show a phenomenon of "cultural backlash" (Norris & Inglehart, 2019) or conservative revolution (Bayart, 2022) in a number of countries, which has also become a major subject of debate for social science (see for example Schäfer, 2022, for a challenging of cultural backlash).

Finally, democratic erosion also builds on a weakening of the protection of democratic rights by populations, sometimes referred to as "democratic fatigue" (Appadurai, 2017) and materialized, for example, by a decline in voter turnout (Piketty, 2019). In some places, this can be seen with the electoral validation of a rollback of democratic rights. One of the factors behind the autocratic wave may be a certain democratic disenchantment related to the perceived inability of democracies to keep their promises (Carothers & Press, 2022), due to an array of complex factors including a reduced room for maneuver of nation states in the face of globalization[12] (Cerny, 1999, Rodrick, 2010), the distancing perceived by citizens

[12] According to the diplomat Robert Cooper: "For the post-modern State, sovereignty is a seat at the table".

of the functioning of institutions,[13] and, at the same time, the rise in inequalities and the concentration of elites in many democratic countries (Piketty, 2019; Tilly, 2003).

In 2020, Cambridge University conducted a meta-analysis based on 160 country analyses conducted between 1973 and 2020. This study (Foa *et al*., 2020) identifies a decline in the satisfaction of young generations with regard to democracy. This is perceptible in many geographical areas, in particular with Anglo-Saxon democracies (Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, USA), Latin America, southern Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

*
* *

Democratic backsliding is certainly one of the major concerns of our time but, in conclusion, it is nevertheless essential to nuance its reach. The analyses above show that while democracy is regressing in an increasing number of areas, it is continuing to progress in about 40% of countries in the world. Democratic backsliding shows that the "end of history" was a naivety but, conversely, there is no indication that democratic erosion gives a new historical direction and is not simply an episode. Current events regularly illustrate that the fights for freedoms remain profound social aspirations.

While the practice of democracy gives rise to an undeniable disenchantment, democratic aspiration would appear to remain intact: "We live in a time where the ideal of democracy is widely loved, but its practices are broadly criticized" (Elstub & Escobar Rodríguez, 2019). According to the most recent World Value Survey (2017-2022) of 60 countries (including China, Iran and Turkey), the perspective of having a democratic regime is positive or very positive for 85% of the world's population.

[13] "In many democratic countries, citizens are not only frustrated with the relatively poor performances of their governments, but also increasingly resentful of institutions and procedures that they perceive as inaccessible, arcane, dominated by partisan interests, crowded with rent-seekers, and generally detached and unresponsive to their needs and interests." (Di Paola and Jamieson, 2018).

2. Democracy and development: do “all good things go together”?[14]

[14] The assertion that “all things go together” comes from the criticism made by S. Huntington in Policial Order in Changing societies (Huntington, 1968) of the common belief at the time that in developing countries, political, social and economic progress would necessarily go hand in hand. See also Do all Good Things Go Together? Conflicting objectives in Democracy Promotion (Leininger *et al.*, 2012).

2.1 – Can there be development without democracy?

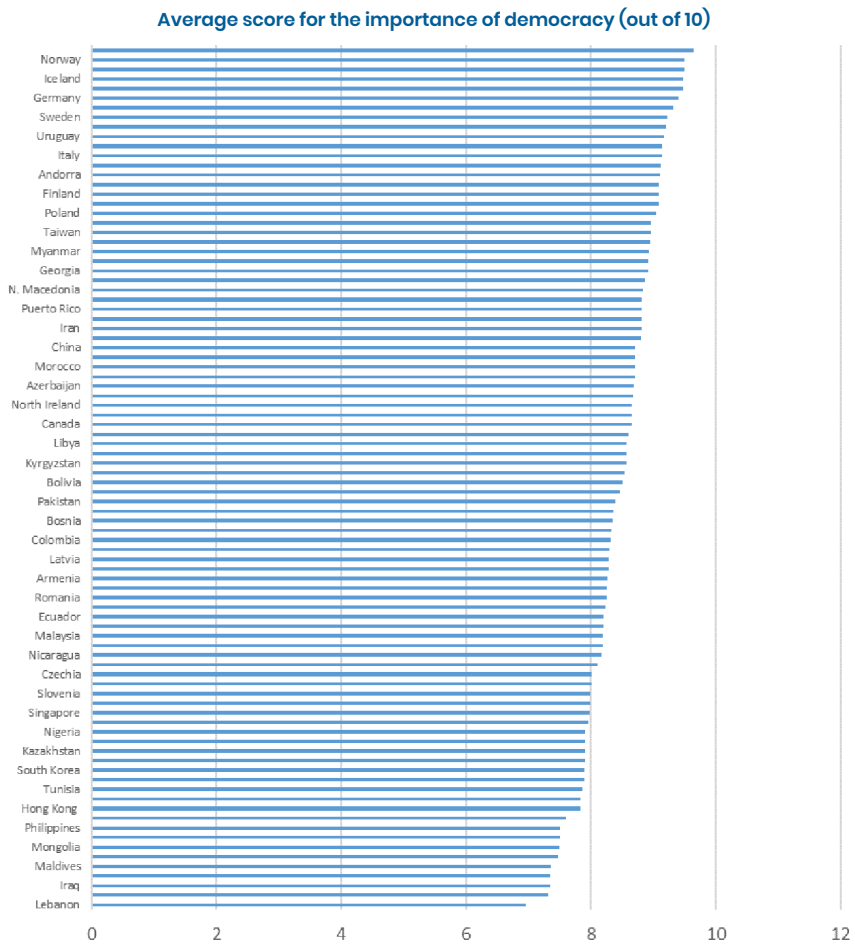
2.1.1 – The intrinsic value of democracy

In the democratic world, and even far beyond according to the international surveys that have been conducted (figure 11), everyone agrees that democracy is a good thing and is thus in itself a desirable objective.

But beyond this intrinsic value of democracy, the link between this form of political regime and development has been a subject of major interest for social science.

The first difficulty is that the concept of development is not easier to define than democracy. By analogy with democracy, development could also be described as an abstract, multidimensional and contested concept which has long been given a more or less generally accepted minimal definition, based on the level of per capita income for a given country. Continuing this analogy, it can also be said that this minimalist development is completed with "superior" forms of development, such as sustainable development and human development.

Figure 11 - Importance of democracy around the world



Source: World Value Survey 2017-2022.

However, some definitions of development go further and include "achievements" in terms of rights and freedoms. Amartya Sen was the main theorist of this conception of development, defining it as a set of "freedoms":

> *"Development can be seen, (…), as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (…). Growth of GNP or of individual incomes can, of course, be very important as means to expanding the freedoms enjoyed by the members of the society. But freedoms depend also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements (for example, facilities for education and health care) as well as political and civil rights (for example, the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny)(…). Viewing development in terms of expanding substantive freedoms directs attention to the ends that make development important, rather than merely to some of the means that, inter alia, play a prominent part in the process."*
> (A. Sen, 1999).

This extended and liberal conception of development encompasses political freedoms and respect for fundamental rights, and therefore largely intersects with the criteria characterizing liberal democracy. It can be said that development, like freedom, partly contains a democratic form of political organization.

Yet a significant proportion of development thinking is based on a narrow and economic approach, in most cases reduced to the minimalist criterion of per capita income. Most of the research exploring the link between democracy and development has been conducted from this perspective.

2.1.2 – Alternative economic development models to democracy?

Since the inception of the question of development, at the end of the Second World War, the link, at global level, between a high level of economic development and the adoption of a democratic political regime can be clearly seen. But this link does not establish a causal connection between these two dispositions.

Consequently, a central concern of economic and political science has always been to question whether there are alternative economic development models that would be accompanied by non-democratic political systems.

This question in particular emerged at the end of the 1950s, as we are reminded by Paul Krugman, when the USSR appeared to be achieving remarkable technological and economic performance:

> *"The speed with which (Eastern economies) had transformed themselves from peasant societies into industrial powerhouses, their continuing ability to achieve growth rates several times higher than the advanced nations, and their increasing ability to challenge or even surpass American and European technology in certain areas seemed to call into question the dominance not only of Western power but of Western ideology. The leaders of those nations did not share our faith in free markets or unlimited civil liberties. They asserted with increasing self confidence that their system was superior: societies that accepted strong, even authoritarian governments and were willing to limit individual liberties in the interest of the common good, take charge of their economies, and sacrifice short-run consumer interests for the sake of longrun growth would eventually outperform the increasingly chaotic societies of the West (…) the growth of communist economies was the subject of innumerable alarmist books and polemical articles in the 1950s." (Krugman, 1994).*

This question of political models more or less favorable for development has since, and to the present day, been continually theorized, debated and tested.

2.2 – The link between democracy and development from a historical perspective

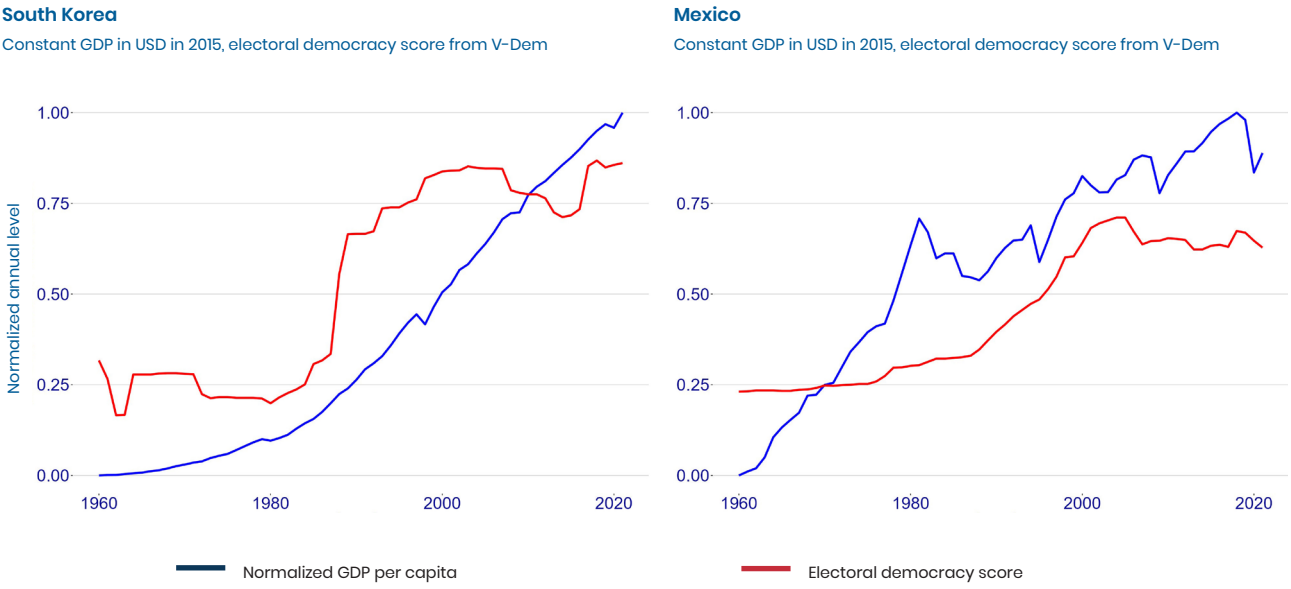
2.2.1 – From development to democracy: modernization

In his seminal work, Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) develops the idea of prerequisites for democratization: democracy arises from social change, in particular the emergence of an educated and urbanized middle class, making it a "consequence" of economic and social development. This idea met with great success and has been applied in many forms, for example, by Barrington More, from a Marxist perspective, through a now famous phrase "no bourgeoisie, no democracy" (Moore Jr., 1966). At a time marked by the domination of evolutionary theories, considering underdevelopment as a historical lag, the analysis of Lipset, together with the analysis of Rostow on the stages of growth, has helped shape what has been called the theory of modernization, by which democratization constitutes an advanced political stage of the process of economic development (Rostow, 1960).

More specifically, Lipset argues that when democratic systems are established in countries that have not achieved a certain level of development, they are fragile and unstable. Conversely, democratic regimes established in developed countries are stable and experience no backsliding (Lipset, 1959).

Several national examples from the 1950s to 1980s would appear to confirm the theory of modernization. The democratic transitions in Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan took place after marked phases of rapid and robust economic development. The modernization also accounts for the failed episodes of democratization in certain South American countries, which are unstable as they do not have a sufficient level of development.

Figure 12 - "Modernization" trajectories in South Korea and Mexico



Source: V-Dem and World Bank.

The theory of modernization has fed into a broad school of thought that has upheld the superiority of authoritarian regimes for initiating the development process, and considered democracy for developing countries at best as a luxury, if not a negative factor. The most emblematic representative of this thinking is undoubtedly Samuel Huntington, through his work in the 1960s and 1970s (Huntington, 1968; Huntington & Dominguez, 1960; Huntington & Nelson, 1976), who wrote in1976, for example: "political participation must be held down, at least temporarily, in order to promote economic development." (Huntington & Nelson, 1976). This school of thought has extended far beyond the academic debate and influenced media and political circles. It has continued to have supporters in recent times.[15]

The supposed superiority of authoritarian regimes for developing countries was built on greater social cohesion, with less political and ethnic adversity, a greater capacity to look towards the long term by focusing on investment in immediate consumption and avoiding electoral short-termism, a vision of the common good able to avoid negotiations with specific interest groups, and faster decision-making and policy implementation (Ben Romdhane, 2007).

The theory of modernization was very influential, and some may still to some extent have it in mind. However, it was highly contested in the 1990s.

2.2.2 – From democracy to development: good governance

The third democratic wave started in the 1970s, then gathered pace and became global in the 1990s following the fall of the Soviet empire. Popular aspiration for democracy emerged in almost every part of the world,[16] and led to the establishment of very diverse electoral democratic regimes, including among the poorest countries in the world. This resulted in a real democratic enthusiasm which prompted an author such as Francis Fukuyama (1992) to determine, in a highly contested book, liberal market democracy as the "end of history".

In addition to this international context, there was an intellectual landscape of development marked by the rise of the institutional economy (North, 1990) and the emergence of the concept of governance from the corporate world.

The World Bank's World Development Report 1991, *The Challenge of Development*, in which a chapter is entitled "Rethinking the State", is emblematic of the paradigm shift taking place at the time:

> *"A strongly held view from the 1950s through the 1970s was that development policies took time to bear fruit, and that this was inconsistent with the politics of short-term electoral cycles (…) Benevolent authoritarian regimes (led by philosopher-despots) were needed, it was argued, to push through unpopular reforms and tame an unruly or otherwise ineffective administration (…) During the 1980s, however, severe disenchantment with authoritarian regimes set in (…) Democracies, conversely, could make reform more feasible in several ways. Political checks and balances, a free press, and open debate on the costs and benefits of government policy could give a wider public a stake in reform. The need to produce good results in order to be reelected could help, rather than hinder, economic change."*
> (World Bank, 1991).

Throughout the 1990s, what some went on to call a "new orthodoxy" (Crawford & Abdulai, 2021; Leftwich, 1993) took root, claiming that democracy is no longer the result of economic development but a favorable condition for this development. For developing countries, democracy was no longer considered as a luxury, but as a benefit and even a necessity.

[15] "At low incomes, democracy increased political violence." (P. Collier, 2009).

[16] Or rather reemerged building on the achievements of the anti-colonial struggles (Mbembe, 2021).

The new orthodoxy highlights the instrumental value of democracy, in addition to its intrinsic value, meaning its ability to bring about positive effects in economic and social spheres. One of the most powerful arguments in support of this instrumental value is provided by Amartya Sen with the now famous observation: "It is not surprising that no famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy" (Sen, 1999).

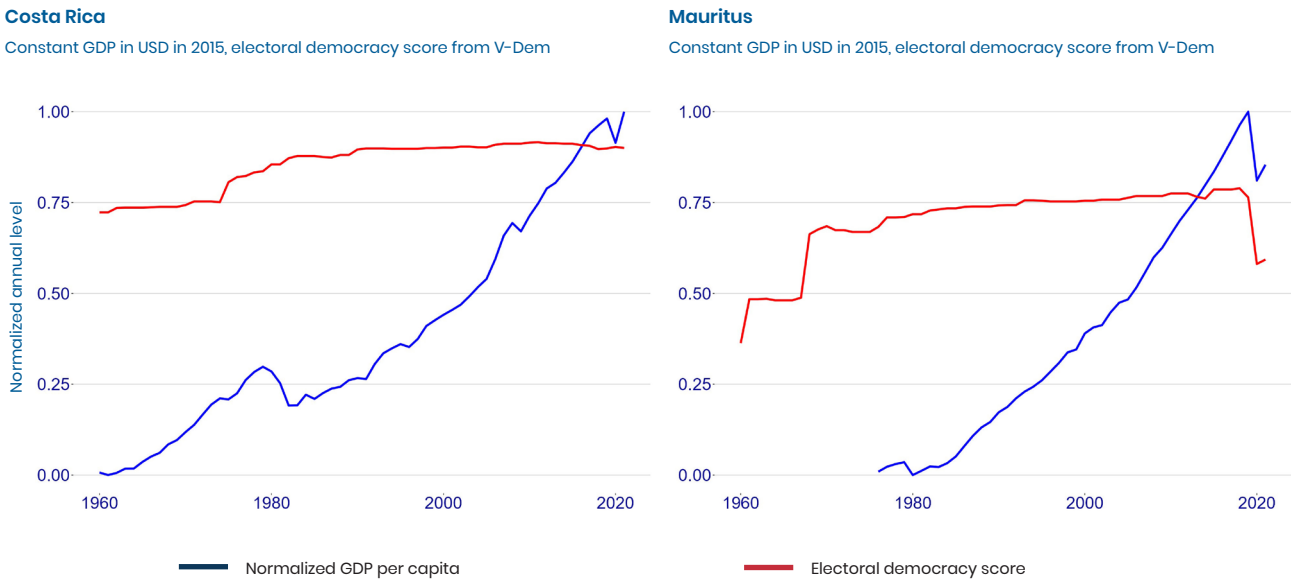
Once again, there are several national historical trajectories where democracy preceded periods of accelerated economic and social development to give substance to this new orthodoxy in Western Europe (Portugal, Spain), Eastern Europe (Hungary), Africa (Botswana, Mauritius) and Latin America (Costa Rica, Paraguay).

The World Development Report mentioned above uses the term "governance" in the field of development for one of the first times. One year later, the World Bank dedicated a full landmark report to this concept (World Bank, 1992), defining governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. Good governance, for the World Bank, is synonymous with sound development management" (World Bank, 1991).

This "apolitical" definition of good governance does not refer to democracy, but rather to sound management (see Section 3.1.2. below). However, good governance has often been considered as the principal mechanism of the supposed causal relationship between democracy and development, through certain characteristics common to these two concepts, such as competition, accountability and participation (Dahl, 1971).

The notion of governance is itself difficult to define and has seen a continuous extension to its scope over time. Initially associated with "sound policies" in the 1990s (see the above quotation), then with effective institutions and a low level of

Figure 13 - "Neo-orthodox" development trajectories in Costa Rica and Mauritius



Source: V-Dem and World Bank.

corruption, its definition has been extended to encompass a large number of characteristics of liberal democracy.[17] The World Governance Indicators (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2010), published by the World Bank, constitute a global reference and define six dimensions of governance: Voice and accountability, Stability and absence of violence, Government effectiveness, Regulatory quality, Rule of law, Control of corruption.

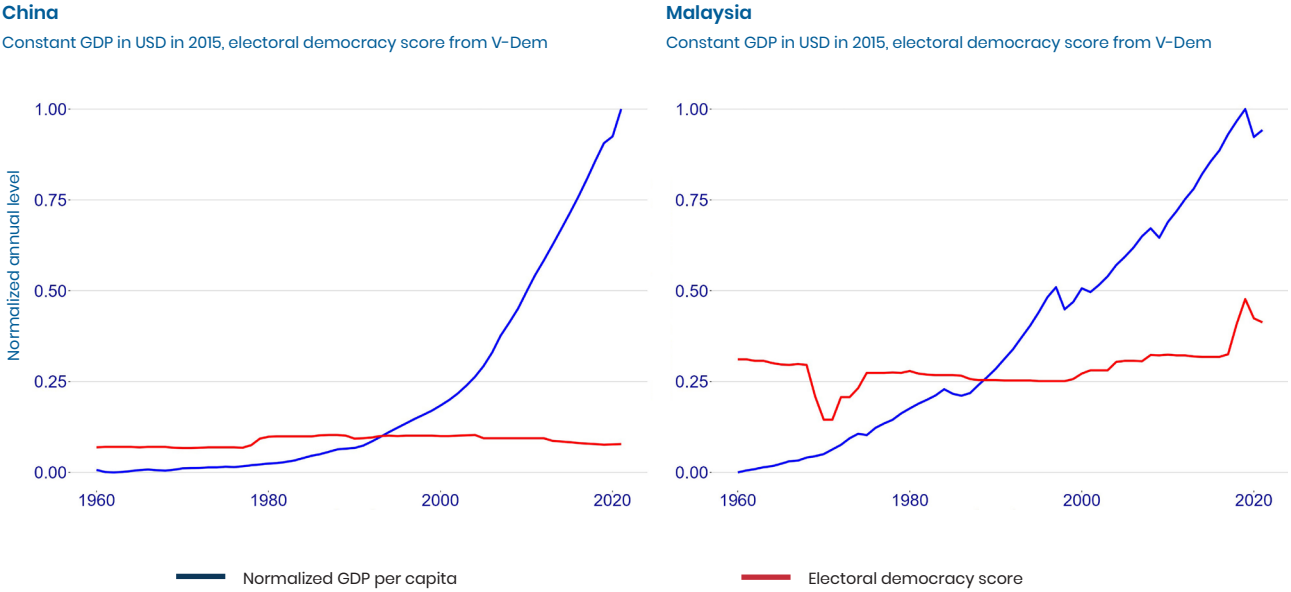
In 1999, a new influential World Bank Study, entitled "Governance Matters" (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999), confirms, through an econometric analysis, this causality between governance and development, and indirectly lends new credence to the theory of the instrumental value of democracy.

However, in the 2000s, a new model was brought to the fore: economic development without democratization. It also provided elements that challenged this new orthodoxy.[18]

2.2.3 – All good things don't go together: the Lee Theory

In 2000, Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore from 1959 to 1990, wrote his memoirs, entitled *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story 1965-2000*. He attributed the formidable economic success of Singapore to an interventionist policy of economic freedoms and social control, not based on human rights (Lee, 2000). Already in the 1990s, what is sometimes referred to as the "Lee Theory" had been the subject of debate, in particular with Amartya Sen (A. Sen, 1997), on the universality of democracy and the inappropriateness of what would be a Western model with "Asian values" (for example, Hoon, 2004).

Figure 14 - Economic development trajectory without democratization in China and Malaysia



Source: V-Dem and World Bank.

[17] Croissant and Pelte (2022) identify 140 sets of governance indicators, some of which contain elements of liberal democracy.

[18] Which is however still advocated, including by the European Union: "The 2017 European consensus on development recognizes the tight link between democracy and development, calling democratic societies with accountable institutions 'preconditions' for sustainable development." (Ionel Zamfir, 2021).

Without going further into this debate, China's spectacular economic success in the 21st century has given a powerful echo to the idea that it was possible to have an accelerated economic development model without democratization. The examples of this "model" are mainly Asian: China, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam. The arguments in favor of this form of interventionism incorporate and add to those of the theory of modernization: long-term vision, cohesion and social order, priority to work and investment.

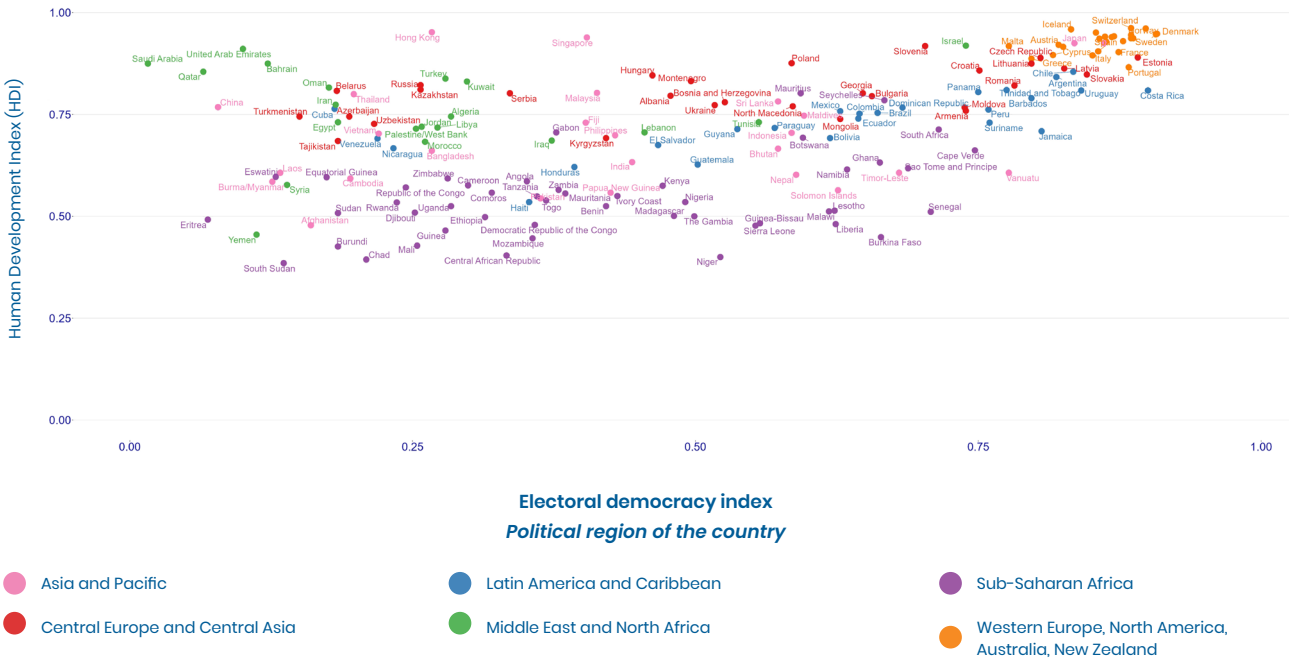
However, the theories of modernization and the new orthodoxy, opposed to causal relations and the order in which the transformations took place, did converge on one point: the outcome of economic, social and political transformation processes took the form of an advanced democracy. But in this interventionist model of development, democracy is neither a means nor an end.

This was summarized in a phrase of Samuel Huntington in the 1960s "all good things don't go together"[19] (Huntington, 1968). While between political transformations (democratization) and economic transformations (development) there was a question of sequencing (which one precedes the other), a possible assumption now is that they may not be interdependent.

2.2.4 – Idiosyncrasies and absence of law

With the development of the measurement of democracy in the 2000s, and in particular continuous measurement, such as V-Dem which gives a democratic score from 0 to 1, there have been numerous attempts to find a law linking democracy and development:

Figure 15 - Human Development Index and electoral democracy score around the world in 2021



Source: V-Dem and UNDP.

[19] Huntington refers here to the book by Thomas Carothers, whose title asks the question "Do all things go together?", about the joint advent of democracy and economic development (Carothers, 2012).

> "*Few questions in comparative politics and development studies and policy have generated as much debate and scholarship as whether there is a causal link between democracy and development, and if so, what causal link.*"
> (Rocha Menocal, 2021, p. 60).

In 2008, Doucouliagos and Ulubaşoğlu conducted the first extensive meta-analysis of quantitative studies seeking to link democracy and growth (Doucouliagos & Ulubaşoğlu, 2008). Based on the analysis of 483 regressions, they confirm what they considered as the existing consensus: the inconclusive nature of the link between democracy and development.[20] More recently, Colagrossi and his co-authors (2020) have updated and extended this meta-analysis by considering more than 2,000 regressions from 188 studies. Once again, they reach the conclusion that more than half of the effects measured are not significant, but they do conclude that there is "increasing evidence of a positive effect of democracy on growth", in particular in recent studies which take better account of the endogeneity between the different variables. They add that the "democracy and growth nexus is largely dependent on the world's regions and periods considered". Consequently, these authors consider that democracy has a strong positive effect on growth in Africa, a lesser effect in high-income countries, and a negative effect in South Asia.

While the door is open to an instrumental value of democracy on growth, this falls far short of being able to infer that there is any law of history. Even the correlation between the level of democracy and standard of living, which used to be very striking, has today virtually disappeared, as shown in the figure 15.

[20] "The distribution of results we have compiled from 483 regressions estimates from 84 published democracy-growth studies shows that 15% of the estimates are negative and statistically significant, 21% of the estimates are negative and statistically insignificant, 37% of the estimates are positive and statistically insignificant, and 27% of the estimates are positive and statistically significant." (Doucouliagos & Ulubaşoğlu, 2008, p. 62).

While it is not refuted, the new orthodoxy is poorly substantiated by these empirical analyses. In effect, the relationship chain connecting democracy, governance and growth would appear not to stand up to the facts when governance is considered in the narrow sense of sound policy management.

Consequently, the "Government Effectiveness" component of governance (from the World Governance Indicators database), which does not show any endogeneity with democracy, is clearly correlated with the level of GDP per capita.

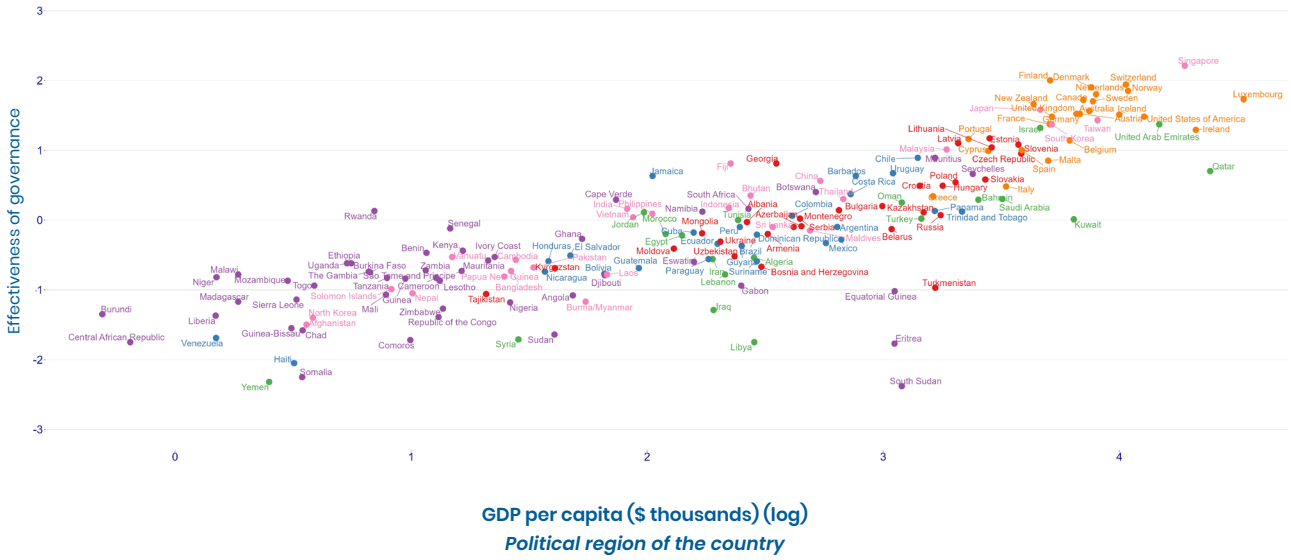
However, the link between democracy and Government effectiveness does not appear in the figure 16, at least below a democracy score of above 0.75.

These correlation analyses do not lead to a direct conclusion on the causal chains, but they do illustrate the well-known fact that there are a large number of autocracies with at least an effective government that can have positive effects on growth and the standard of living (Meisel & Ould Aoudia, 2009; Tarverdi *et al*., 2019) and, conversely, governments that have achieved democratic advances without it being reflected in terms of technocratic governance.

According to Pippa Norris (2011), it is the combination of effective bureaucracy and liberal democracy that may provide the best explanation for growth: good governance would thus not be a consequence of democracy but a cofactor of developmental effectiveness.

However, it is somewhat surprising that so many analysts have insisted on seeking a universal law between democracy and development, as the models are logically dependent on periods, regions, institutional forms, and even the idiosyncrasies of each society. Furthermore, these econometric studies are somewhat distorted, which compromises the likelihood of achieving conclusive results.

Figure 16 - GDP per capita and "Government Effectiveness" score around the world in 2019



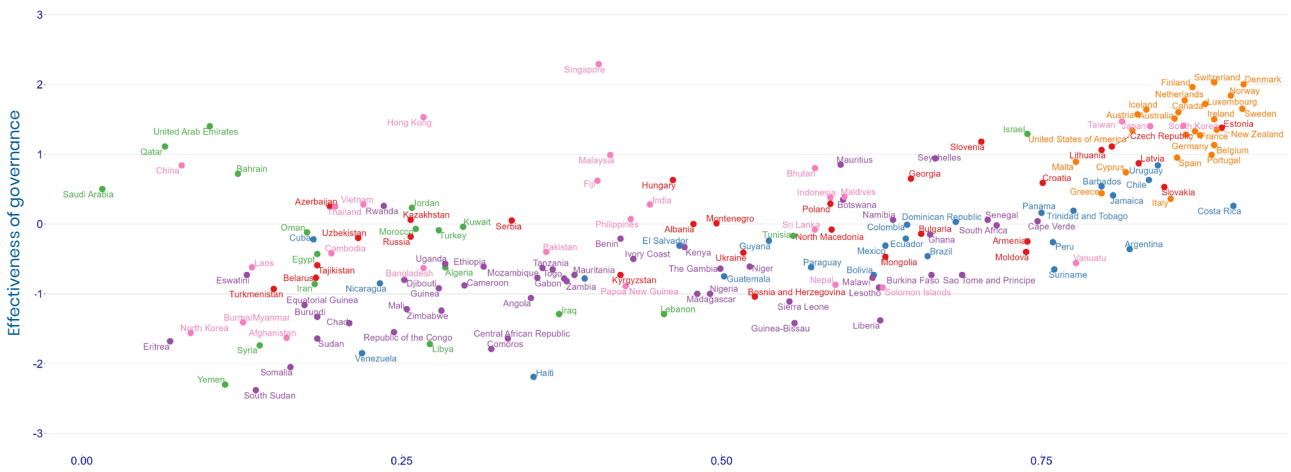
GDP per capita ($ thousands) (log)

Political region of the country

- Asia and Pacific
- Central Europe and Central Asia
- Latin America and Caribbean
- Middle East and North Africa
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand

Source: V-Dem and UNDP.

Figure 17 - Electoral democracy index and "Government Effectiveness" score around the world in 2020



Electoral democracy index

Political region of the country

- Asia and Pacific
- Central Europe and Central Asia
- Latin America and Caribbean
- Middle East and North Africa
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand

Source: V-Dem and UNDP.

Firstly, electoral or liberal democracy do constitute a relatively homogeneous model which may be subject to "historical laws". But this is not the case with autocracy, an extremely heterogenous category which is only defined by the absence of democracy (Cassani, 2021). In the V-Dem Dataset 2021, China's electoral development index is just between North Korea and Eritrea. Can we thus be surprised at the low significance of the link between democracy and growth tested in the econometric regressions?

Several authors have studied the "growth miracles and disasters" (based on the categories of Przeworski and Limongi, 1993) and have found that autocracies often predominate among the miracles, and are almost hegemonic among the disasters (Knutsen, 2021), as noted by Halperin *et al.*, 2009:

> *"95% over the worst economic performance of the last 40 years has been realized by non-democratic governments. Similarly, almost all the refugee crises have been created by autocratic governments."*

Secondly, democracy can have an impact on economic development through indirect causal chains, which include very different time scales that obscure the statistical link between the two phenomena.

Beyond the governance already commented on, several authors stress that democracy results in greater investment in education (Acemoglu et al., 2019), and more generally in social spending (Rocha Menocal, 2021). In the long term, the effect of democracy on development could thus be achieved through human capital (Doucouliagos & Ulubaşoğlu, 2008).

Greater political and economic stability may be considered as a further advantage of democracy (Doucouliagos & Ulubaşoğlu, 2008; Rigobon & Rodrik, 2005; Rocha Menocal, 2021), which converges with the lower likelihood of sharp recessions mentioned above. This argument is extended to the fact that democracies are more likely to remedy errors, and therefore react during certain crises, which encompasses the observation of the absence of famine in democracies made by Amartya Sen.

It would appear to be recognized today that political settlements, meaning the relations between the various social groups, and in particular the attitude of the elites, play a major role in the link between political regimes and development (Rocha Menocal, 2021), leaving much scope for local idiosyncrasies in this relationship.

However, as we have just seen, despite this diversity of situations, and although there is no consensus on this subject (Clark *et al.*, 2017), the arguments in favor of the direct instrumental value of democracy in terms of development, and even more so its indirect value, do remain consistent. But until now, the focus has only been on the narrowest sense of economic development: per capita GDP growth.

2.3 – Beyond economic development

2.3.1 – Gender equality as an example of the extended effects of democracy

When the notion of development is extended to social components, such as the level of education or the child mortality rate, the instrumental value of democracy is more apparent (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2019; Crawford & Abdulai, 2021; Doucouliagos & Ulubaşoğlu, 2008). For example, by specifically studying child mortality as a dependent variable, Gerring *et al.* (2015) find that the immediate effect of democracy on this variable seems positive but weak. However, according to these authors, the effect of the democratic stock (level of democracy over time) is fully significant. These results would appear to confirm that democracy has a positive effect on human capital, but rather in the medium/long term.

The more development is considered in a broader sense, the more it is difficult, at least through a quantitative approach, to assess the instrumental value of democracy, due to endogenous effects. Gender equality can provide a good illustration of this difficulty. When we move away from the narrow conception of development as simply economic growth, gender equality is obviously one of its characteristics. But this equality also contributes to what makes democracy. For example, it is present in numerous synthetic variables of the V-Dem democracy indices.[21] In other words, it is difficult to differentiate between the intrinsic value and instrumental value of democracy on issues such as gender equality.

However, the studies that have examined the links between these variables firstly find that the link is not as apparent as might be expected. Here again, there is a great diversity of non-democratic regimes and it is observed that certain regimes, communist and revolutionary in particular, have been characterized by high levels of female participation, in the labor market and even in political life, although, here again, the lowest levels are undeniably observed in non-democratic regimes (Beer, 2009; Zagrebina, 2020).[22]

However, generally speaking, a link does in fact exist between democracy and gender equality (Richards & Gelleny, 2007), including in poor countries (Beer, 2009), in particular when the dimensions of this gender equality are extended. The link also goes both ways: it is also the participation of women that consolidates democracy and the latter is a precondition for the development of gender equality. Here again, the changes take place more in the long term in a process of mutual strengthening, and once again, the democratic stock is undoubtedly more decisive than the current status of democracy in a given country (Beer, 2009).

But gender equality appears to be less of a consequence of democracy, but rather an element of the cultural transformation process which accompanies and develops democracy (Inglehart *et al.*, 2003). After statistically studying individual behavior in an inter-country analysis, Zagrebina (2020) thus finds that: "democratic citizens have more egalitarian gender attitudes than people in non-democratic countries". In this respect, the ongoing democratic erosion jeopardizes this sense of the culture of gender equality in certain countries (Roggeband & Krizsán, 2018), characterizing an aspect of the "cultural backlash" mentioned above.

In short, while there appears to be fairly strong interlinkages between democracy and gender equality, in particular over the long term, for this type of notion extended to development it is difficult and not necessarily relevant to differentiate between the intrinsic value and instrumental value of democracy.

2.3.2 – The climate: a new frontier of democracy?

The new challenge facing political systems, and among them democracy, is undoubtedly the response to climate change. Here, we will only briefly outline the main arguments exchanged in this debate, which in itself would merit being fully developed.

The failure of developed countries to provide an appropriate response to climate change has given rise to a new criticism of democracy in the public debate (Shearman & Smith, 2007), illustrated by the frequently quoted comments of the scientist James Lovelock in 2010 in an article in The Guardian:

[21] More precisely, the gender equality variables are present in the liberal, participatory and egalitarian democracy indices. They do not appear as such in the variables of the electoral democracy index (except through the opening of electoral participation). But certain variables of this electoral democracy index, such as those characterizing freedoms given to civil society, are arguably themselves strongly correlated with certain aspects qualifying gender equality.

[22] "Gender inequality indices demonstrate that in some of the most oppressive regimes, such as Belarus, China, Libya and Kazakhstan, the level of gender equality, as measured by indicators relating to health, empowerment and labor force participation, is about the same as it is in developed Western democracies such as New Zealand and USA. And in some newly established democratic countries, such as Romania, Mexico, Colombia, South Africa, this level is even lower than in Vietnam (Gender Inequality Index 2015), which is one of the most oppressive regimes." (Zagrebina, 2020).

"Even the best democracies agree that when a major war approaches, democracy must be put on hold for the time being. I have a feeling that climate change may be an issue as severe as a war. It may be necessary to put democracy on hold for a while."
(James Lovelock in Hickman, 2010).

Certain "shortcomings" of democracy are again highlighted in the case of climate change: the short-termism, the dependence on lobbying groups, and the priority given to present well-being, or in other words the impossibility of making a sacrifice, are mentioned as barriers to the democratic response to the mitigation challenge (for a review of the arguments, see Willis, 2020). In addition to these arguments, which were already mentioned in the debate on democracy and development, there is also the need for an effective climate policy to take action on individual private behavior and the economic freedoms of the market. But this would be awkward for a liberal regime based on freedoms and the independence of public and private spheres.

In this area again, the links are reciprocal, as democracy could also be endangered by climate change, to the benefit of populism, making it a factor of democratic erosion and the rise of populism.

According to Jamieson and Di Paola (2017), the legitimacy of democracy is thus based on two pillars: the ability to resolve problems encountered by citizens (legitimacy through public utility) and the ability to express collective preferences (legitimacy through citizen expression). Yet in the field of climate, these forms of legitimacy, which often mutually reinforce each other, lead to strong tensions because the benefits of the resolution of the climate problem go largely towards "non-citizen" targets that are distant in space (citizens from other countries), time (future generations), and even in terms of genetics (non-humans):

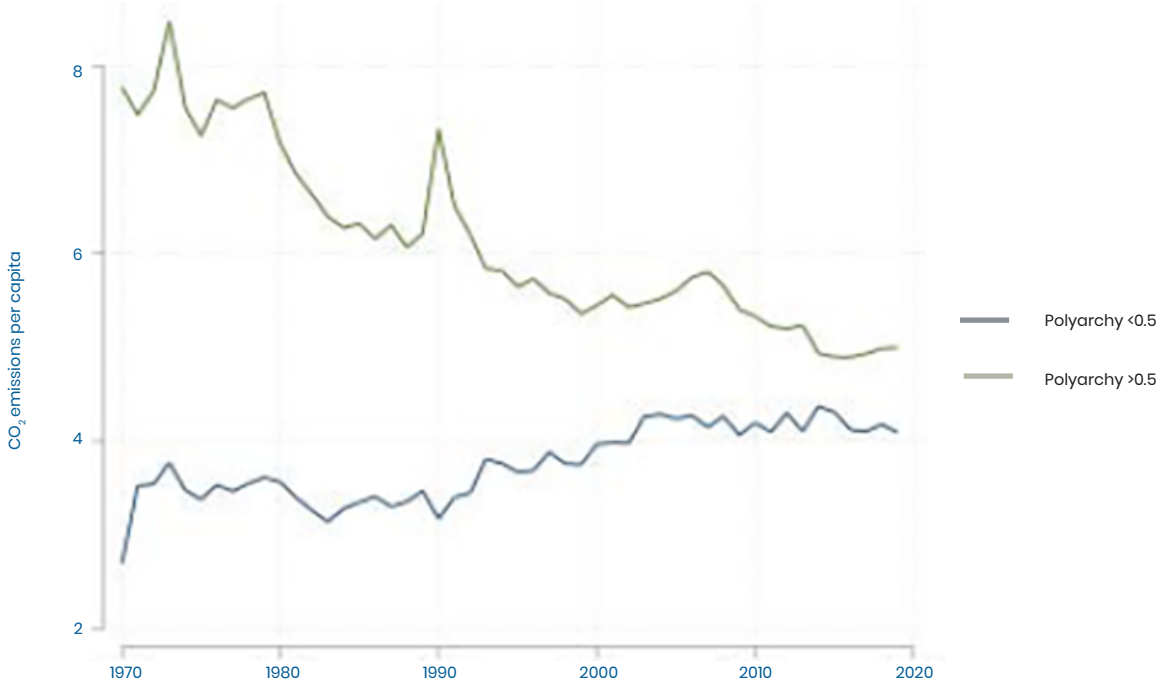
"*We thus face an apparent dilemma: if democracies fail to successfully address climate change and other problems of the Anthropocene, their legitimacy will be challenged on public utility grounds. If they aggressively attempt to address them, their legitimacy will likely be challenged on expressed preference grounds. Either way, we can expect the power of populist figures and movements to grow.*"
(Di Paola & Jamieson, 2017).

But these strong tensions between democracy and climate change do not lead to any alternative in terms of political regimes. Unlike the case of economic growth, there is no equivalent to a "Lee Theory" in the field of the low-carbon transition, meaning an example of autocracy with a stronger performance than democracies with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The quantitative analyses conducted on the issue confirm this observation (V-Dem Institute, 2021). However, it is very difficult to compare emission reduction policies between democracies and autocracies as they are each at different stages in their development processes. The raw facts are clear in this respect: democracies have much higher levels of emissions than autocracies and, at the same time, are more committed to emission reduction processes (V-Dem Institute, 2021).

It is, however, difficult to draw conclusions from these trends. Some authors have attempted to measure the effect of the political regime on reductions by assessing the wealth effect. Clulow (2019) thus concludes that emission reductions are higher in democratic regimes than in autocratic regimes, all other things being equal. There are many arguments to support this observation: stronger support from democracies for multilateral commitments, greater value given to human life, the place given to civil society and the expression of defenders of values and interests, such as nature protection, and the place given to deliberation.

Figure 18 - Per capita CO_2 emissions between 1970 and 2019 by level of polyarchy



If democratic regimes do not respond to the challenge of climate change, it is not in autocratic alternatives that the responses should be sought, but in a change of democratic practices. Many authors thus advocate a deepening of deliberative democracy, in particular to take greater account of knowledge and extend the expression of collective interest beyond simply the interests of citizens as expressed through voting (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2019; Willis, 2020).

*

* *

The search for a causal link between the type of political regime and economic growth, at the various possible stages of development, has not proven very successful, despite considerable efforts and successive theories. The idiosyncratic aspect of political, economic and social trajectories, and their interactions, specific to each national community, no doubt take precedence over any law of history.

But when the notion of development is extended beyond simply collective material wealth (and therefore also the power of nations) to aspects of well-being and the extent and equality of the rights and freedoms of individuals, the distance between development and democracy disappears, with the latter being absorbed into an extended vision of development as representing freedoms.

Can the climate issue offer a new outlook on the link between democracy and development? It is too soon to tell and even if it may pose a real challenge to existing democratic practice, non-democratic regimes appear to be even less well-prepared to address it.

3.
Development institutions in support of democratization?

3.1 – At the frontier of the field of development institutions

3.1.1 – Extension of the field of development

Development assistance institutions have followed a continuous path to extend the notion of development. At its inception and until the 1980s, these institutions mainly conceived development as a catching-up process, characterized by the enrichment of nations and measured by national GDP per capita. From this origin, the scope of development institutions was gradually developed based on two areas.

The first area of extension involved a shift from macroeconomic objectives, expressed at national level (economic growth), towards objectives of well-being, human rights and freedoms involving the individual level, in particular through a human rights-based approach. This shift took place over the long term with different stages,[23] but in 1986 the United Nations adopted a "Declaration on the Right to Development" which, in its first article, recognizes the right to development at individual level. The priority given to the fight against poverty in the 1990s can be interpreted as a sort of transition from macroeconomic objectives (national poverty rate) to human rights and individual well-being objectives (no individual deprived of their rights and basic needs). At the turn of the 2000s, the MDGs enshrined the predominance of individual objectives in the consensus on development.

The second area of extension was in the opposite direction, from the national level to the global level, by including the management of global public goods in the concept of development. The global interdependence around the common management of a stock of finite resources appeared in the 1970s (The Limits to Growth, 1972) resulting, the following decade, in the concept of sustainable development (Our Common Future, 1987). But it was from 1990 onwards, with the major environmental conferences, that development became a global issue arising out of national development trajectories: a theorized approach, in particular through the concept of global public goods (Kaul *et al*., 1999).

The SDGs appeared as a perfect synthesis of the intertwining of objectives at these three global, national and individual levels: macroeconomic (growth, industrialization in LDCs), national public policies (agriculture, education) and territorial policies (cities), distribution of wealth (reduction of inequalities), protection of individual rights and freedoms (fight against poverty, access to information, gender equality, equal access to justice) and global challenges (vaccines, global energy mix, protection of biodiversity, climate). The interdependence of the scales of the objectives and the diversity of targets mean that the SDGs address many issues which tie in with the political field in the broad sense.

The SDGs constitute the culmination of the extension of the field of development institutions, but they stop just at the frontier of politics in the more institutional sense of the term. However, Sustainable Development Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – contains a number of targets that are also components of liberal democracy: promotion of the rule of law, equal access to justice, reduction of corruption, transparency of institutions, participation in decision-making, free access to information, protection of fundamental freedoms. The SDGs cover a broad conception of democratic governance, but without including the free choice of leaders, the cornerstone of electoral democracy, and also do not explicitly mention the freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

[23] The first included the birth of the international humanitarian movement following the Nigerian Civil War in 1969, the promotion of the approach based on essential good in the 1970s (International Labour Office, 1976), and the interest in civil society starting in the 1980s.

3.1.2 – The ambivalence of development assistance towards politics and democracy

The official definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA) dates back to 1972 and still prevails. It targets "the economic development and welfare of developing countries".[24] This definition gave it the innovative approach of development closely focused on economic catch-up.

In 2016, the OECD sought to bring ODA closer to the recently adopted SDGs, by recognizing that "development, human rights and peace and security are indivisible and interrelated",[25] and partly extending the scope of ODA but without modifying its definition. In reality, in a number of countries, ODA finances activities covering the entire range of the SDGs, well beyond simply national economic development, including the promotion of democracy.

This divergence between the field opened by the official macroeconomic definition of ODA and the diversity of activities actually supported by international development institutions in the context of the SDG "mandate" is absolutely symptomatic of the constant ambivalence in the role of external aid in developing countries, and in particular its role in terms of "politics" in the broad sense.

The unanimous adoption of the SDGs by 193 countries in 2015 could suggest a consensus around a broad notion of development, and in particular including political dimensions. But the development supported at major international events and the development promoted in the actual implementation of domestic public policies may differ on many issues. In particular, leaders in developing countries often continue to be attached to a role of external aid confined to action mainly only focusing on economic development (see Moloi, 2017), and with strict respect for the principle of sovereignty.[26]

This North-South ambiguity over the field of development assistance can be seen on the ground with a differentiated practice whereby development institutions mainly operate in the economic sphere in emerging countries and, more generally, upper-middle-income countries, and with a much broader scope in fragile or conflict-affected countries and LDCs. Consequently, the assistance for democracy and civil society is mainly delivered in the latter countries (see below).[27]

A second ambivalence involves the common thread within the development community in terms of the consideration given to politics stemming from the rationale by which the political field is addressed by development institutions. Indeed, there are various motivations behind development assistance: mutual benefits, influence, promotion of values, solidarity, management of global goods (Melonio *et al.*, 2022). The field of politics, and in particular democracy, is often addressed from two different perspectives in the relationship between ODA donors and recipients: from the interests that position ODA within a mutually beneficial geopolitical relationship and from values that give ODA the role as a vehicle of "universalism" through the promotion of human rights, freedoms, or democracy (Çıplak, 2016).

These two approaches to ODA relations – geopolitical partnership and promotion of values – can coincide when the "universal" values in question, including democracy, are shared. They

[24] "ODA consists of flows to developing countries and multilateral institutions provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies, each transaction of which meets the following test: a) it is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective, and b) it is concessional in character and contains a grant element of at least 25 per cent." (OECD, 1972, quoted in OECD, 1996).

[25] OECD, 2016.

[26] According to a principle of division of labor by which "State-level societies have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their own people, while the international community serves to establish and maintain background conditions in which just domestic societies can develop and flourish" (Beitz, 2000).

[27] This differentiation is also included in the extension of the role of ODA adopted by the DAC in 2016 (see note 23 above): "We recommit to peacebuilding and statebuilding, good governance, and effective institutions as crucial means to support the 2030 Agenda in fragile and conflict-affected contexts."

can, of course, also be conflictual for donors when the interests take precedence over the values and lead to support for political regimes with no concern for rights and freedoms. But above all, the coexistence of diverse motivations, and the ambiguities and double standards they may lead to, are among the sources of the severe criticism of "coloniality"[28] regularly made by the "South" with regard to development assistance.[29] The support for democracy is at the heart of this ambiguity and this criticism.[30]

These ambivalences are addressed differently depending on the nature of the development institutions concerned. The multilateral system, in particular for development banks (World Bank and regional banks), but also the specialized institutions of the UN (FAO, UNIDO, etc.), has a purely economic and social mandate detached from any political consideration, as shown, for example, by the article from the World Bank's Articles of Association:

> "*The Bank and its officers shall not interfere in the political affairs of any member; nor shall they be influenced in their decisions by the political character of the member or members concerned. Only economic considerations shall be relevant to their decisions, and these considerations shall be weighed impartially in order to achieve the purposes stated in Article I*".
> (World Bank, 2012).

However, this impartiality has inherent limitations, in particular because it is possible to separate politics and policies when addressing increasingly broadened objectives.

Bilateral aid institutions are not in the same situation: their cooperation is included in a multifaceted political relationship (political, diplomatic, commercial, military) in which the promotion of values and models is an explicit objective for reasons of influence. The bilateral cooperation of advanced democracies is at the forefront of the difficult management of the ambivalence between the geopolitical role and universalist role of development assistance.

However, most bilateral institutions conduct or finance programs to support democracy. Some have even defined the promotion of democracy as one of the priorities of their development assistance policy (see below).

This is especially because emerging countries, which are new donors for South-South cooperation generally not registered under ODA, have a vision of development focused on economic growth, strict respect for the sovereignty of partner countries, and the absence of any form of universalism.[31]

These complexities of development assistance in terms of the promotion of democracy and, more generally, the political question need to be briefly analyzed from a historical perspective.

3.2 – A historical perspective with regard to politics

3.2.1 – The anti-politics machine

In a historical synthesis, Thomas Carothers (2010)[32] identifies two schools of thought, associated with communities of practitioners, constantly present in development institutions: the "promoters of development", who conceive the latter as an apolitical process for economic and

[28] Defined by "the global articulation of a 'Western' system of power [...] based on a supposedly natural inferiorization of non-Western places, human groups, knowledge and subjectivities" (Restrepo & Escobar, 2009).

[29] "Geopolitically motivated policy makers tend to use democracy promotion as a stick with which to trash geostrategic rivals while giving geostrategic friends a free pass." (Carothers, 2020).

[30] See, for example, the symposium "From Colonialism to Democracy Promotion". University of Southern Denmark. Odense. 21-22 April 2007. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13629390701622630

[31] "China has been providing foreign assistance to other countries and regions within the 'South-South Cooperation' framework...: not imposing any political conditions, not interfering in the internal affairs of the recipient countries, and fully respecting their right to independently choosing their own paths and models of development." (Zhao, 2023, p. 37).

[32] Thomas Carothers, co-author of a reference work "Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution" (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013), may be considered as the researcher having most studied the consideration of the political question by international aid agencies.

technical transformation at national level, and the "promoters of democracy", on a broader basis for the consideration of politics, related to institutions, rights and individual freedoms.

As analyzed above, the school of thought concerning the promotion of development, mainly supported by economists and experts from various economic, social and environmental sectors, was virtually hegemonic during the first decades of development assistance. The objectives were not simply about economic catch-up: collective support for the theory of modernization suggested that the political transformation would follow the economic transformation.

Development assistance was built as an instrument to overcome underdevelopment by bridging a macroeconomic deficit (of savings, foreign exchange) through financing for investment projects.

Back in the 1970s, it became apparent that the addition of technical and sectoral projects cannot result in economic catch-up if they are not included in a policy framework giving them a real developmental effectiveness.

However, the resulting imposition of liberal policies by the Bretton Woods institutions in fact marked a leap forward in the technification of politics. In the context of structural adjustments, development institutions thus totally separated policies (policy) from politics (polity). The former became the domain of international finance institutions, to the extent that they were sometimes drafted entirely by them, and were depoliticized by an argument of economic effectiveness. Underlying this, during this period, development institutions appeared to almost prefer autocratic regimes where decisions were made exclusively by the executive branch, the guardian of economic rationality (Van de Walle, 2012). In fact, politics was reduced to a simple competition for the exercise of power, left with some indifference in the hands of local actors without affecting the content of political directions, and therefore at best a considerably weakened democracy.

The expression "anti-politics machine" from James Ferguson[33] has often been used to characterize this conception of development assistance, which consists in depoliticizing local issues by integrating them into a technocratic vision of problems to be resolved that are entirely economic and technical (concerning reforms, resources, organization and training), built around solutions which development institutions are capable of providing.

In the 1980s, promoters of democracy, political scientists and legal experts started emerging in the field of development, mainly through two types of action: firstly, the start of programs to support civil society in developing countries and, secondly, financing, external to aid institutions, for a number of foundations whose purpose is to promote democracy, including in the Global South.[34]

But it was in the 1990s that democracy really became an issue in the field of development.

3.2.2 – Democracy becomes a real issue

The beginning of the 1990s marked a turning point in terms of the consideration of the political and democratic question by development institutions. The development objectives were thus initially extended to human rights and freedoms. But it was obviously the change in the international situation that was a decisive point: the fall of Soviet communism and the resulting dream of the "end of history", and the extension of the third wave of democratization to large groups of developing countries in Eastern Europe and Africa. As pointed out above, a new orthodoxy had challenged the theory of modernization, considering democracy as a positive factor, or even a precondition for development.

[33] In a famous book, "The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho", James Ferguson (1994) analyzes how the World Bank "invents" a Lesotho with no political concerns to resolve its economic problems, built on the technical responses of a development project.

[34] For example, National Endowment for Democracy Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy, and Asia Foundation.

In 1990, donors started supporting democratization in developing countries. For example, in the Treaty of Maastricht, the European Union set out the following objective for its external policy: "develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Article 121, 1992). But several bilateral cooperation institutions also followed suit:

> *"Over the course of the 1990s, a number of aid organizations, including USAID, CIDA, and Sida, added democracy to their core agenda. These agencies developed programs across the full spectrum of what quickly became a standard template of democracy aid – support for free and fair elections, political party development, constitutional reform, parliamentary strengthening, judicial and other legal institutional reform, local government strengthening, advocacy NGOs, independent media support, and democratic civic education."*
> (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013).

But beyond this direct and diversified support for electoral processes and democratic institutions, this new consideration for politics also gave rise to strategic and crosscutting developments.

Democratic conditionality. In 1990, the concept of democratic conditionality emerged, linking the allocation of aid to democratic advances and respect for freedoms and human rights by recipient countries. But it was the European Union which went the furthest with the formal inclusion of this conditionality in its policies (Éthier, 2001). But several bilateral donors expressed opinions along the same lines.[35] In the following decade, the creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation by the U.S. authorities in 2004 was based on the same principle of establishing a privileged partnership with poor countries achieving democratic advances.

Participation. Participation was already present in the action of many actors, in particular of civil society. Since the 1990s to this day, it has been a watchword for the projects of all development agencies (World Bank, 1990). This major development has more to do with local democracy than democracy as a political regime, but it is certainly worth mentioning.

Civil society. In the 1980s, donors started directly supporting civil societies in developing countries, including organizations for the defense of democratic freedoms and human rights. From the 1990s onwards, this support became a full-fledged mode of action increasingly used by development institutions. Today, development assistance for civil society organizations or channeled through them[36] amounts to just over $20 billion, or about 12% of total aid (OECD, 2020).

Democratic governance. Governance appeared in the field of development in the 1990s (see above) and has now become a full-fledged sector for most aid institutions, and a crosscutting theme for all sectoral action. This extension was progressive. Governance was initially narrowly confined to a bureaucratic dimension (in the sense of government effectiveness), but was gradually opened to more political dimensions, such as equal rights (primarily gender equality), State-citizen relations (accountability, fight against corruption, protection of persons implicated in legal proceedings), and protection of certain freedoms (freedom of expression, association, worship). The concept of democratic governance, a combination of the bureaucratic and political dimensions, thus took shape from the end of the 1990s onwards. Democratic governance also includes what might be described (along with basic education) as "infrastructure of democracy",

[35] During the Franco-African Summit in La Baule, President François Mitterrand declared that France would give priority to countries achieving democratic advances for its foreign aid allocations. The British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, also declared before the Overseas Development Council that British aid would give priority to countries in transition towards pluralism and human rights. In 1990, Herman Cohen, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, also announced that democratization would be added to economic policy reform and human rights as conditions for American aid (see Ake, 1991).

[36] Civil society organizations (CSOs) can either be a recipient of aid, in which case it directly finances the activity of the CSO, or act as an intermediary in the context of the implementation of a project in a given region, in which case the CSO supports the implementation of a specific project using the funds of a donor.

meaning what enables progress towards equal citizenship, such as information, but also universal civil registration and, more generally, convergence between practical rights and theoretical rights.

These aspects (direct support, strategic openings, crosscutting practices) form the backbone of diversified action by development institutions to promote democracy in aid-recipient countries.

However, they do not replace the anti-politics machine still in place in development institutions, but rather enter into conflict with it, including in these new fields or new practices. Consequently, the issue of governance is often likely to be confined to a technical issue of effectiveness (of organization, means and competences), largely independent of democratic issues:

> *"The good governance agenda in particular, was subject to a sustained critique for being misguided and technocratic. Rather than bringing politics into development, it was found to have taken politics out of governance, thus becoming the problem that it had purported to fix."*
> (Venugopal, 2022).

The same criticism is made of assistance to civil society, which may have the effect of diverting civil society organizations from their community and activist functions, turning them into technocratic operators for the implementation of development programs. Achille Mbembe thus considers that democracy itself has been depoliticized by development:

> *"In this way, the question of democracy was depoliticized. Since the 1990s, State reform and the democratization of African political regimes have been systematically addressed not from a (geo)political perspective, and even less so historical-cultural, but through an exclusively managerial and neo-institutionalist prism."*
> (Mbembe, 2022a).

Despite these reservations, the emergence of democracy as a real issue has brought about permanent changes in development assistance strategies and practices. Democratic governance, programs to support civil society, and participation are today established and important aspects of the strategies of development institutions. But since the early 20th century, it has also been necessary to reckon with the return of geopolitics in development assistance.

3.2.3 – The return of geopolitics

The 21st century undeniably marks a return of geopolitics in development assistance:

> *"Globalization challenges, such as violent conflicts, increasing migration and numbers of refugees, as well as climate change as a global challenge, have turned discourses on development cooperation away from development-oriented motives towards the strategic interests of development cooperation providers, such as expanding their own political and economic opportunities."*
> (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2021).

The break started in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 which marked a new turning point in the link between ODA and politics:

> *"Not least since 11 September 2001, a group of countries has quickly moved from the periphery of the international community to the top of the policy agenda. It is an extremely heterogeneous group of 30–50 countries, which are loosely characterized by weak institutions and poor governance, often in combination with violent conflict."*
> (von Engelhardt, 2018).

"Fragile States" entered the arena of development assistance and with them a new era of international insecurity. Development policy was thus increasingly assigned a role of prevention or protection against international threats of destabilization, terrorism, and even, gradually and to a lesser extent, significant migration flows.[37]

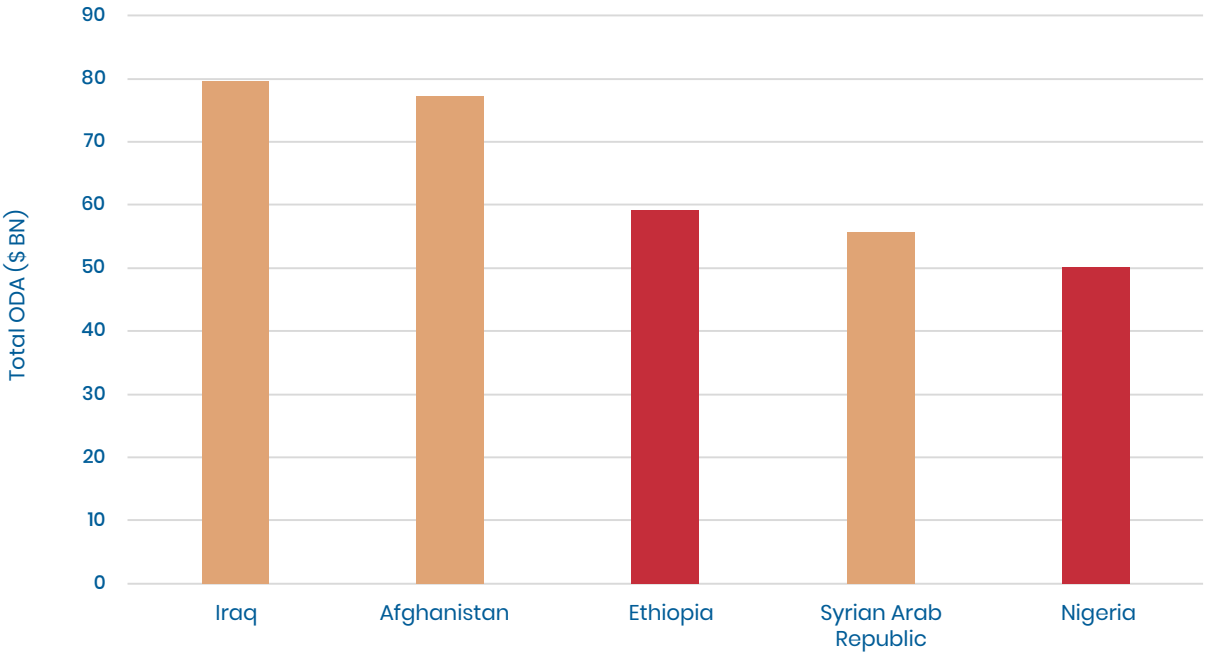
Donors were thus required to make considerable efforts for all the dimensions, including political and institutional, of fragile States considered as international security issues, as shown in the figure below of the main Official Development Assistance recipients in the 21st century.

In the 1990s, ODA had been devised to support local democratic developments, partly free of the geopolitical considerations of the Cold War. The presence of countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria among the main aid recipients of the century clearly marks the return of geopolitics in ODA and with it, tension between an ODA with a universalist vocation and an ODA that protects well-understood interests (see above). In 2019, 38% of ODA was allocated to conflict-affected or fragile countries as defined by the World Bank. This proportion stood at 15% in 2000. In 2022, the main ODA recipient was Ukraine with $16.1 billion, or 7.8% of total ODA.

Even beyond geopolitical security concerns, ODA has increasingly become the response to international shocks: humanitarian crises, security crises, refugee crises, climate crises, health crises.[38] Aid for refugees, which was previously marginal, thus amounted to $29.3 billion in 2022, or 14.4% of total ODA.

Another fundamental aspect of this re-geopoliticization is the emergence of major emerging countries as new donors (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2021). These new actors in international assistance not only intensify competitive relations between donors regarding certain partnerships or resources, they also propose an alternative

Figure 19 - Main ODA recipients in the 21st century between 2000 and 2019



Source: OECD.

[37] "Western societies appear to be undergoing a historic shift away from projecting influence around the world and toward insulating themselves from external influences." (Carothers, 2020).

[38] Approximately 10% of ODA was devoted to the Covid-19 response in 2020 and 2021.

development model,[39] as well as cooperation based on horizontality, non-interference, and economic development as a priority, meaning in particular no demands in terms of democracy or human rights in cooperation relations.

3.3 – Assistance for democratization: elements of assessment

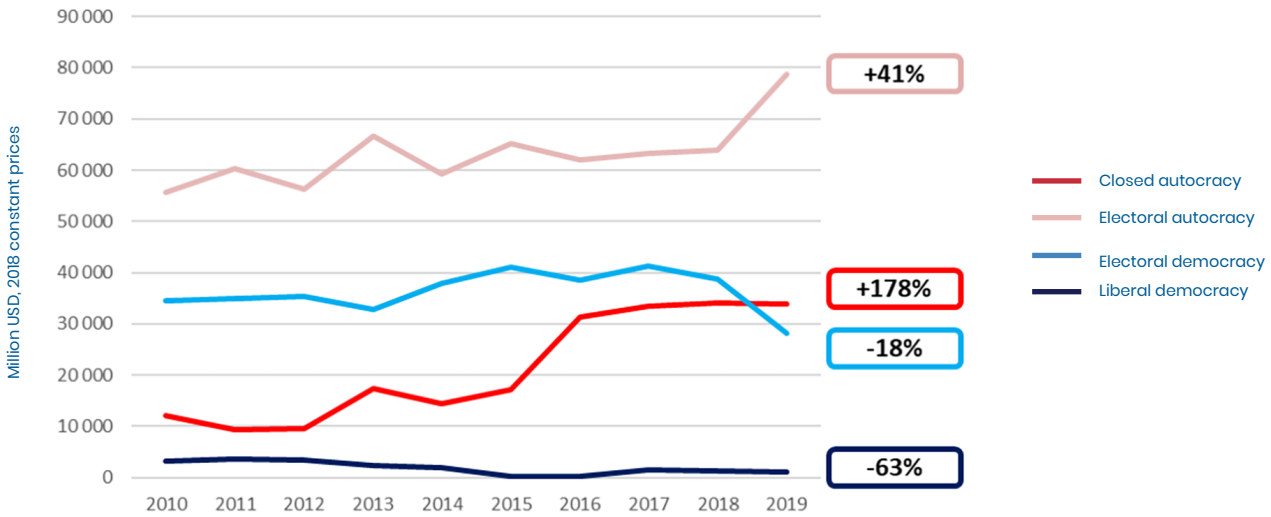
3.3.1 – Does the allocation of assistance foster democracies?

A first way of asking the question "Does the allocation of assistance foster democracies?" is to determine whether the aid allocation strategies have given a premium to democratic countries, or countries in the process of democratization.

The econometric study of the determinants of the allocation of assistance was a subject of interest until the early 2000s, in particular in the context of the debate on aid selectivity initiated by the World Bank (Alesina & Dollar, 2000). This is much less the case today and it is difficult to find recent studies analyzing any democratic effect influencing the allocation of aid.

If this effect does exist, it is at best secondary. All the analyses agree on the fact that the key criteria for the allocation of assistance are the "needs" (generally measured in terms of poverty level), donors' interests, and the population of the recipient country. The effect of "good governance" and the associated freedoms, where appropriate, were generally deemed positive but secondary in earlier studies (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; In'airat, 2014; Neumayer, 2003). It is likely that in the recent past, geopolitical influence and the increasing role of crises have contributed to weakening this secondary determinant of the allocation of assistance. In hindsight, it would seem that overall, the democratic conditionality has had little impact on the action of donors (Youngs, 2010).

Figure 20 - Allocation of ODA by type of regime of recipient countries between 2010 and 2019



Source: OECD (2022).

[39] "Most major powers are consequently in the process of building 'new global strategies' with Africa. To this end, they have established programs not only intended to reposition themselves on the continent, but also to show that authoritarian rule may be a development model as valuable and as effective as all the others." (Mbembe, 2022b).

Indeed, combined with the democratic backsliding analyzed in the first section, the new context of international assistance has led to financing being increasingly channeled towards autocratic regimes,[40] as clearly shown in the figure 20.

Similarly, the proportion of assistance allocated to countries where democracy is regressing[41] rose from one third in 2000 to two thirds in 2020.

However, the OECD (2022), analyzing the major periods of democratization and autocratization over the last decade, concludes that a "premium" does exist in response to democratization processes in the form of supplementary assistance:

> *"ODA demonstrates a consistent pattern in responding to countries that democratize: they were generally rewarded with an increase in ODA, including more governance support. This is not the case for countries that autocratize in which ODA responses are more mixed."*
> (OECD, 2022).

This "reward" for democratization simply mitigates the various factors that have been added in recent decades to what could be a strategy for the allocation of assistance, depending on the nature of the regimes of partner countries. This is the case with the geopolitical logic of the response to crises and threats, but also with the increasing attention paid to global public goods by development assistance (see below).

3.3.2 – Does development assistance have an impact on democracy?

A number of analyses have sought to statistically measure a potential impact of development assistance on the democratization of recipient countries. These statistical studies in particular test the assumption, sometimes supposed based on examples in the socio-political literature, of an inverse relationship where assistance could, especially in fragile countries, reinforce the autocracies in place (Bräutigam & Knack, 2004; Hagmann & Reyntjens, 2016). It could otherwise stand in the way of democracy, by favoring close relations with the executive to the detriment of parliamentary political life and accountability towards citizens/voters (Van de Walle, 2012).

A recent systematic review of this abundant literature (Gisselquist *et al*., 2021) allows a review of the main findings. Overall, the statistical studies do not conclude that ODA has an impact on the level of democracy of the recipient country. This may be reassuring in terms of the potential negative effect of ODA on democracy. But the most surprising aspect of this result is the number of studies devoted to it (64 identified by the systematic review, see table below). Indeed, the impact of aid on democracy can only combine the impact of aid on development, for which a considerable literature establishes flimsy evidence (see Howarth, 2017, for a summary), and the impact of development on democracy, for which an even more abundant literature is itself inconclusive (see previous section). Overall ODA, with its multiple variations, has an effect on democratization through numerous channels. Their direct and indirect effects are undoubtedly contradictory, with very different time scales, meaning that testing a universal causal model between these two variables does not seem to be relevant.

The fact that development assistance tends to reinforce the regimes in place, whether autocratic or democratic, or that in the long term, assistance for education has positive effects on the democratic advancement of a country, are reasonable assumptions, supported by local contextual analyses. But at global level, they cannot be confirmed by statistical evidence.

[40] For example, the OECD (2022) notes a 19-fold increase in humanitarian aid allocated to closed autocracies over the last ten years.

[41] Measured as an annual decline in the V-Dem electoral democracy index.

Table 4 - Effects of ODA on democracy in the recipient countries identified in the literature

NUMBER OF STUDIES BY TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT
Assistance for development (64)	39	30	19
Assistance for democracy (32)	26	9	5
Assistance for democracy + other	29	11	5

Source: Gisselquist *et al.* (2021).

The test of the impact of "assistance for democracy" on the democratization of recipient countries is more interesting. The causal chain is more clearly identified and the supposed impact occurs within a short period, even if the definitions of assistance for democracy are different depending on the studies reviewed.[42] The table below shows that the majority of the studies testing this relationship produce a significantly positive result (26 models tested out of 40, or two-thirds). Other models have compared assistance for democracy with subcategories (technical assistance, project support) and also report mainly positive results.

This rather positive impact must of course be qualified, by observing that assistance for democracy is often provided in situations where there are conditions for advances in democracy (civil society, media, for example). Assistance for elections can only be provided if the regime in place has decided to organize elections. In other words, there is a correlation between democratic advances and assistance for democracy. But this observation can be broadly applied to development assistance: its impact can only be through a combination of its means with the efforts of local actors. Existing studies would thus appear to confirm this role of assistance to support democracy as a co-factor of democratization in recipient countries.

3.3.3 – A partial integration of politics in development assistance practices

Promotors of democracy have always remained very much in the minority compared to promoters of technical and apolitical development, using the categories of Carothers and De Gramont (2013, see above). Furthermore, in a recent retrospective study, Carothers (2020) notes that the school of thought promoting democracy has stopped making headway in development institutions since the 2010s. However, the promotion of democracy has taken root in donor policies, strategies and operations in a variable manner.

A comparative analysis of European donors (European Partnership for Democracy, 2019) establishes four cases:

- Countries with an explicit external policy to support democracy "on top of" the development policy (Denmark, but also Spain)
- Countries whose support for democracy is an integral part of the development policy (Sweden, but also Poland)
- Countries with a policy or strategy document to support democracy separate from their development policy (Norway, Finland)
- Countries with no policies or strategies to support democracy (France, Germany, United Kingdom)

[42] Some only define "assistance for democracy" as assistance for elections, others add assistance for civil society, assistance for the media and even institutions and human rights (Giesselquist *et al.*, 2021).

A more detailed analysis (conducted in EPD 2019) set out to compare these declarative policies with the actual levels of priority and financial amounts. However, Nordic countries clearly stand out for the level of integration of support for democracy in their external action. Conversely, donors in the largest countries have the lowest level of integration. For these countries, the support for democracy is addressed indirectly through strategies to improve governance and/or promote human rights.

These findings are not surprising, as Nordic countries base their development policy on the promotion of universal values the most, including democracy, while the largest donors often have a more marked approach to protect interests, in particular geopolitical and/or neighborhood interests. Furthermore, these major donors often have a stronger economic priority in their strategies, in conjunction with financial instruments that are closer to the market than simple grants.

In this respect, these major donors are similar to multilateral institutions which, in the same way, address the issue of political freedoms indirectly through human rights[43] (and governance). Unlike democracy, the human rights-based approach is not simply a question of values, it has a legal basis which in particular involves inclusion in an "explicit normative and analytical framework grounded in a consensual global legal regime of international human rights treaties."

While the integration of the promotion of democracy "from the top", meaning through political institutions, is partial and differentiated within development institutions, it is however much more common and marked for "democracy from the bottom up", in particular in terms of participation, transparency and accountability towards citizens:

> "*The first step for many democracy practitioners was to come to terms with the fact that every element of democratic consolidation is more about working out conflicting political interests than achieving technical improvements. Many governance advocates go further and argue that governance principles such as participation, transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability should apply across all sectors.*"
> (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013).

In this respect, the promoters of democracy have significantly developed all development practices based on these notions of participation, civil society involvement, and accountability.

3.4 – Beyond assistance: What role for support for democracy?

3.4.1 – The two futures of development assistance

The financing of global public goods (GPGs) is set to play an increasingly important role in development financing. One third of development assistance already has a climate co-benefit. This financing will take very different forms: for the climate alone, issues related to mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage already require separate approaches.

To what extent will this financing be developed with new financing tools or within Official Development Assistance? This issue goes far beyond the scope of the present reflection. But it could be argued that the growing importance given to global public goods will contribute to less consideration being given to politics in development assistance policies. Firstly, the financing rules for GPGs will be increasingly negotiated in international agreements, for example, as is the case with the future Loss and Damage Fund for compensation related to the climate. They will by nature not consider the type of political regime of the stakeholders.

[43] This commitment is regularly reviewed through a joint publication of the World Bank and the OECD entitled "Integrating Human Rights into Development" (World Bank & OECD, 2016). The fourth edition scheduled for 2023 is in the process of being published.

Secondly, international environmental issues give Official Development Assistance a prominent role in mobilizing private flows, with the objective of creating a leverage effect to scale up investment for low-carbon transitions and nature protection. Here again, the issue of democracy, as well as concerns regarding human rights and public governance, will not be a central focus.

Alongside the financing for GPGs, the second major issue for development policies will be the contribution to the international management of fragilities and crises (Melonio *et al.*, 2022) from three perspectives: prevention of global risks, local geopolitical competition and international solidarity. Fragile States today constitute the main development challenges, and this will be even more the case in the future, at the same time as major challenges for global security. Today, 60% of development assistance that can be attributed geographically is earmarked for fragile situations as defined by the OECD. This percentage is set to increase: by 2030, 86% of the world's poorest people will be living in a fragile environment (against 62% in 2015 and 73% today, OECD, 2022).

It is the action in these fragile and crisis environments that will increasingly become the focus of the political question in ODA policies, in particular in terms of democracy.

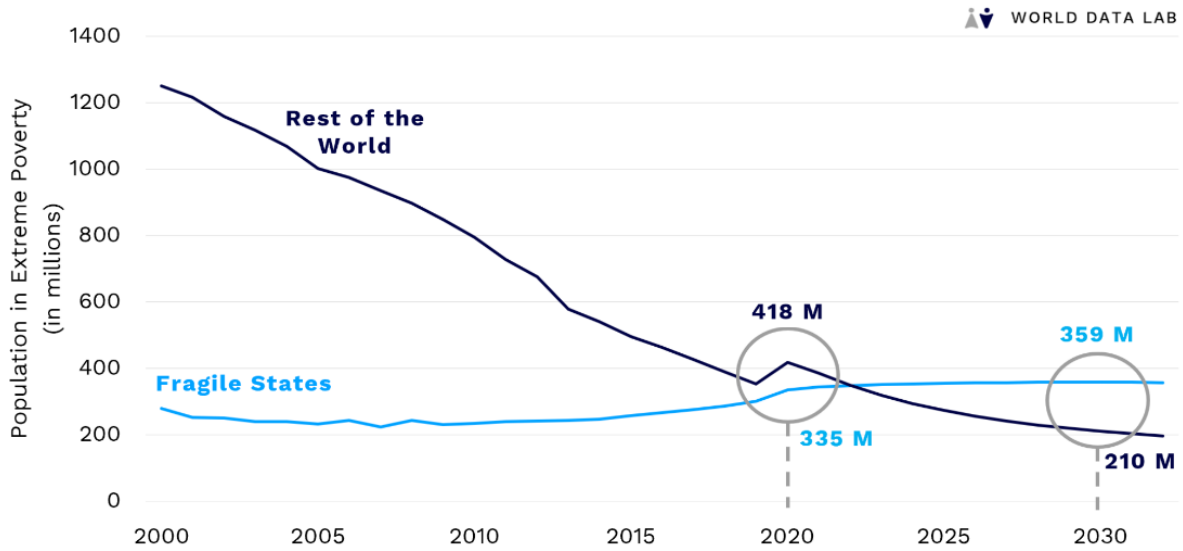
3.4.2 Politically smart aid

In the past, the most significant donor action to support democracy has been in fragile and conflict situations, in particular in the form of state-building or nation-building. The recent assessment appears to be extremely disappointing, in particular with repeated failures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Mali.

More generally, poverty is not being reduced in fragile situations, despite the efforts of international assistance.

These elements show that there is most probably little to be expected in the future from an unaltered continuation of assistance in conflict and fragile situations. In areas where local political issues and development are closely intertwined, "business as usual" technocratic approaches are

Figure 21 - Number of people in extreme poverty in Fragile states



Source: World Data Lab.

N.B. This graph should be interpreted taking into account the fact that the list of Fragile States (as defined by the OECD) is not fixed in time.

quicker to reach their limitations.[44] It is in this context that the promoters of democracy have advocated for politically smart aid.

According to these analysts (Booth & Unsworth, 2014; Carothers & De Gramont, 2013, Rocha-Menocal, 2021), this type of aid would require a number of managerial and instrumental changes (Thier, 2019): think politically, align with the context, base operations on assessments of the economic policy of actors, be more flexible, take more risks, diversify partners, focus on processes and change and therefore be less focused on measurable deliverables, and not seek optimal solutions but appropriate solutions. These recommendations could lead to completely calling into question many practices firmly established in development institutions: results-based management, the focus on the measurement of effectiveness and even, to a certain extent, the project approach.[45]

In reality, politically smart aid, as pointed out by Carothers and De Gramont (2013) in their historical approach, has often been implemented alongside development institutions, in particular by specialized organizations (Lodge *et al*., 2017).

3.4.3 Support for democratic innovation

The democratic backsliding analyzed above is most probably one of the major phenomena of the 21st century of greatest concern. It is likely to affect all areas, including the key objectives of development assistance: in security and humanitarian crises across all continents, but also in the field of climate through the twin effect of undermining multilateralism and the consequences of a cultural backlash in a number of countries caused by the growing awareness of the global environmental issues among national opinions.

The analysis of this phenomenon is recent and it currently seems to have been studied very little from the perspective of development, development assistance, or even the preservation of global public goods. It should be borne in mind that international aid will at best be a useful tool, but very minor in addressing the global phenomenon of democratic backsliding.

However, Carothers (2020) calls for a renewed promotion of democracy in this new context, focused on tackling democratic erosion. This could primarily involve enhanced partnerships with fragile democracies in the developing world in order to tackle democratic fatigue and disenchantment.

The fight against democratic erosion can renew the agenda for strengthening institutions by focusing on fields where democracy is most often undermined: equal citizenship, the promotion of deliberation, improvement in the quality of information and public debate, freedom of the press, freedom of association, control over digital instruments, etc.

The new field of democratic innovation is open to international support through very diverse forms of action, including addressing fragilities caused by democratic erosion: deliberative practices, management of the commons, countering misinformation and polarization, improving public debate, etc.[46] As has been seen in the past, it can be expected that this field will be covered on the periphery of the major development institutions, in particular by political foundations, certain NGOs, or even think tanks (Lodge *et al*., 2017).

[44] "A group of world leaders, including former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, came together with policy experts… in June 2018 in Bellagio to draft a set of five principles and ten key approaches in order to build a platform for broader dialogue and action. At their core is a simple but powerful idea: the challenges of fragile states are inherently political, and therefore the starting point must be to keep politics at the center of approaches to address them… Five key principles – articulated in the Bellagio Consensus – must form the bedrock for a reinvigorated approach: keeping politics at the center; local ownership; a transition from donor-led, many priorities to country-led, few priorities; inclusion and engagement from idea to implementation; and confidence building along the way." (Thier, 2019).

[45] "Move from the project logic to the pathway logic. This requires a new generation of tools." (Mbembe, 2022a).

[46] "The emergence — nearly everywhere — of new forms of organization, expression, and mobilization among the young generations testifies to the vitality of social movements and the vigorous innovations underway in the field of creative activity. Access to digital networks, for example, is contributing to an increase in deliberative capacity." (Mbembe, 2022b).

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* *

The support for democracy has gradually found a minor but influential place in the action of development assistance. The action for direct support would appear to be a favorable co-factor in the democratization process. Above all, the components of a "bottom-up" democratization, such as participation, the inclusion of civil society in public policies, and accountability, have been fully integrated into aid strategies and instruments.

However, several developments could threaten this balance: global democratic backsliding, the increased importance of GPGs, the re-geopoliticization of development assistance. It is in crisis and fragile situations that politically smart aid is the most needed, but also in cases where aid is criticized the most for its past record.

Giving new impetus to international support for democracy could involve renewing approaches in crisis situations and providing extensive support for democratic innovation, in particular through specialized organizations.

4.
Conclusion

4.1 – New impetus towards more substantive democracy?

Today, democracy is most certainly more far removed from constituting a component of a universally desirable world than it was a decade ago when the development of the Sustainable Development Goals was under debate.

Indeed, a common thread in the three sections of this *policy paper* is most certainly the breakdown of various aspects of democratic universalism. Democratic erosion and wavering mark a decline in democratic practices in many countries in the world. The instrumental value of democracy is challenged by the economic success of China and other countries, which highlights the diversity of global political and economic trajectories. Finally, external support for democracy from development institutions comes up against both an accusation of "coloniality" and a world where crises and geostrategic rivalries are becoming increasingly important.

This crisis in democratic universalism mentioned above should also be qualified. The recent democratic backsliding needs to be put into perspective through a historical vision, not only of ebbs and flows in democracy, but also through the continuous transformation of democratic forms in light of contemporary issues.

In this long-term perspective, it is necessary to differentiate between contemporary democratic practices (especially their procedural dimensions), which are becoming less appealing or are even being rejected in some cases, and the growing aspiration for an ideal of "substantive democracy". This refers to a form of organization enabling, through deliberation among equals, the construction of a collective project and the achievement of goals desirable for all. Indeed, according to the studies that seek to measure the universality of aspiration for democracy, everything points to the fact that it still remains in place.

Furthermore, the vision of purely material development, even if it is combined with geopolitical power, might not stand as a collective ideal faced with the scale of the aspirations for rights and freedoms, but also the will to address the global challenges, such as climate change. Democratic regimes would appear to maintain an advantage when it comes to these extended issues of development.

Potential new impetus for democracy would thus primarily reside in a renewal and even a "re-enchantment" for its practices. This would lend credibility to its ability, at local level, to reinvent the construction of public policies through informed and inclusive deliberation, but also to address global issues, such as rising inequalities and the limitation of natural resources.

As shown in the previous sections, the action of the "promoters of democracy" over several decades within development institutions has achieved significant results, both in terms of the integration of good practices and the impact of operations to directly support democratic processes. But a second-generation approach by these institutions will need to move beyond the more or less inclusive and conditional support to procedures for institutional organization and good governance to align with this perspective of more substantive and more diverse democratic practices, from the level of local actors up to the level of global issues.

For development institutions, the support for democracy certainly requires a multi-pronged strategy: i) the integration of democratic practices (participation, transparency, accountability, etc.) in all their programs; ii) patient and long-term support for the infrastructure of democracy that enables progress towards equal citizenship; iii) the development of "politically smart" aid action, concentrating on fragile situations, which will need to mark a break with the conventional technocratic instruments, and with local political actors and to a large extent through specialized institutions on the periphery of the development institutions themselves; iv) multifaceted support

for democratic innovations, in particular in the fields of education, information and digital technologies which contribute to strengthening the public debate and combating democratic fatigue. This is AFD's objective for its course of recent and future action to support democracy.

4.2 – AFD Group's support for democracy

AFD Group, the main operator for France's policy for solidarity-based and sustainable investment, now aims to include support for democratic dynamics more extensively in its intervention strategies. This concerns all the countries where it operates, with all its instruments and all its clients and partners: governments, but also local authorities, companies, the financial system, local and international civil societies, and the research community.

This institutional, partnership-based and instrumental diversity allows for a graduated approach depending on the geographical areas concerned, with a more technical approach and more limited range of instruments in areas where democratic values have shallow roots and are contested or even prohibited, and a more political and committed approach wherever democratic dynamics are more favorable.

AFD Group's approach does not involve democratic conditionality or direct support for procedural democracy. It seeks to stimulate, extend and coordinate existing or nascent spaces for democratic deliberation, with discretion and the right distance. Democracy is not a simple or consensual issue and especially must not be simply another sector of activity for a development institution.

To build confidence in peoples and focus on their priorities and modes of organization, while respecting their history, AFD Group could deploy its action in three directions, similar to the floors of a common house.

The first floor is the level of the foundations on which substantive democracy can be built.

The first level of support must be situated at the roots of democratic practices, from which they germinate and grow. It is the level of citizenship and community life. The community aspect, everything which allows people to come together, debate, deliberate and engage in public action serving the general interest, is central to the history of the emergence of democracy in France (social economy, mutualism, cooperative movement, mass education) which we can share with similar experiences around the world.

The foundations are also the level of the infrastructure. Indeed, as with development, democracy has its edifices, its standards and its networks – parliaments, institutions, media, civil registry, individual rights, associative rights. This infrastructure of democracy constitutes a first area of support for AFD Group's financing, with all its instruments and on all continents. This also concerns, with increasing intensity and urgency, access to free and quality information, in the age of artificial intelligence and social networks.

In less favorable situations, AFD Group will need to seek to take action in areas, sometimes limited, where rights, freedoms and deliberative spaces are created, in particular within civil society.

More generally, a gateway for AFD Group must be "bottom-up" democracy in all fields and projects: participation, transparency, accountability, in particular inclusive public services and through a civic dialogue with their users, who are the backbone of substantive democracy.

Consolidating the foundations of democracy: examples

Democratic governance in Jordan: €6.4 million project. Partners: CFI, NIMD and Westminster Foundation. Start: early 2024.

> ***This project aims to support the democratic reform in Jordan, working with the Jordanian Parliament, in particular women MPs, to strengthen the role of political parties and access to adequate information on political life.***

State-youth dialogue in Senegal: €8 million project. Partners: Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal. Start: 2022.

> ***This project is contributing to strengthening the civil participation of young people by supporting more than 300 CSOs, structuring a State-youth deliberative group, rehabilitating and building a networking for 9 youth drop-in centers, and granting scholarships.***

Support for associations in Burundi: €9 million project. Partners: Republic of Burundi. Start: 2024.

> ***This project promotes State cooperation with associations by helping to structure national CSOs and establish frameworks for consultation between public authorities and CSOs.***

State-civil society dialogue framework and financing in Ethiopia: €4 million project. Partners: Agency for Civil Society Organization. Start: 2022.

> ***This project supports the national authority for NGOs (ACSO) and aims to develop the civic space and pluralistic financing for civil society in dialogue with public institutions.***

> ***The second floor is the living space, of projects and actors, where "the democracy of others" needs to be supported.***

The existence of an appropriate and inclusive national strategy, resulting from extensive deliberation (development and/or transition strategy) is the first space of democratic sovereignty and a precondition for the success of development policies. Assisting partners with a participatory development of their own strategy and trajectory is an integral part of the work of development institutions. Development projects themselves, always specific, inclusive and contextualized, and even the smallest, constitute advanced democratic experiences if they are well-designed.

More specifically, AFD Group seeks to support the projects of actors who contribute to supporting democratic dynamics, decentralization, and the strengthening of the rule of law. 60% of AFD's financing goes to actors other than governments. The support for democracy also involves supporting inclusive policies led by public companies, including Public Development Banks. Support for civil society actors promoting democratic values, and for employers' and workers' organizations, is also a major field of activity for AFD Group.

In the latter case, AFD Group focuses on indirect action with human rights defenders, foundations promoting democracy, and local public organizations, with the aim of reaching diverse actors, without being intrusive or conditional.

Support for the democracy of others: examples

Just energy transition in South Africa. €300 million of policy-based budgetary financing. 2022.

This financing aims to support South Africa for its low-carbon path, the reduction of its dependency on coal, and the implementation of a just energy transition policy. An associated grant is financing the institutionalization of the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) gathering representatives from the Government, civil society and scientists to develop a Just Transition Framework.

Access to justice in Mauritania: €7 million project. Partners: Ministry of Justice of Mauritania, Terres des Hommes Lausanne, Association of Female Heads of Households (AFCF). Start: 2022.

This project is helping to provide access to justice for the most vulnerable by developing community justice (with "Mouslihs"), and by developing activities to inform people about their rights and provide legal assistance to the most vulnerable people, in collaboration with the NGOs Terre des Hommes Lausanne and the Association of Female Heads of Households (AFCF).

Parliamentary cooperation in Benin, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone: €1 million. Partners: French National Assembly and national parliaments. Start: 2024.

The project aims to strengthen the role of parliaments as a watchdog of democracy, in their capacity as institutions responsible for maintaining the balance of power, while building a network among parliamentarians for exchanges of knowledge.

Financial inclusion for the resilience of vulnerable people in Mexico. €200 million of policy-based budgetary financing. 2022.

This financing aims to empower vulnerable people through the implementation of a financial inclusion policy. It includes technological innovations in financial services, action to strengthen the sector of finance for people, an action plan to reduce inequalities in the pension system, and collaboration with financial institutions for the informal economy with the Central Bank.

Morocco Digital Strategy and openness of administrations. €550,000 project. Partner: Agency for Digital Development (ADD). Start: 2020.

This project is supporting the implementation of the "Morocco Digital 2020" strategy for the promotion of digital tools and the development of their use among citizens, through two programs: the Digital Lab, an innovation laboratory for the rapid digitization of the various public services, and Defisnationaux.ma, a portal where administrations can present national challenges to be taken up by users.

The third floor is the terrace, an open-plan space to increasingly develop democratic innovation.

The support for democracy, with its infrastructure, its projects and its actors, will only achieve modest gains if its practices are not given a renewed appeal, with a widely shared aspiration for it or, in other words, if the democratic ideal is not restored. This concerns every country in the world, including France and Europe.

This involves renewing practices, in particular the most threatened aspects concerning deliberation and strengthening social cohesion. Democratic innovation is a fast-growing space all around the world, in multiple forms, for example, the creation of citizen assemblies and the use of new technologies to strengthen citizenship, which provide many opportunities for support. AFD Group will be stepping up its action to support the dynamism of this movement of innovation.

But AFD Group's role is also to build networks for this profusion of initiatives by participating in multi-stakeholder and multi-space platforms for mobilization and exchanges, which establish contacts between these democratic energies. Beyond the exchange of experience, it also involves bringing actors other than governments into the international debate, able to promote the values of democracy and sustainable development, actors from associations, of course, but also global coalitions of public and private actors, such as Public Development Banks (see below).

Contributing to democratic innovation: examples

Project to support democratic innovation in Africa. Partner: Innovation Foundation for Democracy. Multi-country Africa. Start: 2023.

> ***The Innovation Foundation for Democracy is a pan-African non-profit organization whose aim is to contribute to the emergence of models of democracy rooted in African history, cultures and territories. A network of campuses known as Labos, its vocation is to become a place for the creation and organization of new flows of ideas and new links between players in the field. Its influence extends across the continent, in dialogue with African diasporas and the rest of the world.***

Strengthening local democracy with Civic Techs. €700,000 project. Partner: International Development Research Center (IDRC). Benin. Start: 2018.

> ***The project gives citizens, especially women and young people, the opportunity to get involved in local democracy. They are encouraged to work together to propose and develop digital solutions so that everyone can take part in the preparation and monitoring-evaluation of Municipal Development Plans.***

Urban incubator mechanism. €10 million project. Partners: "Incubator" operators. Multi-country Africa. Start: 2020.

> ***Through a citizen-based approach, urban incubators support the implementation of urban projects by developing equipment and activities (sports and cultural events, creation of associations, etc.) led by users. An exchange network has been developed for more than ten African countries.***

Balkans for Optimizing Opportunities, Sustainability and Transformation of Civil Society (BOOST). €3 million project. Partner: European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA). Start: 2024.

> ***This project is strengthening the role of civil society in supporting sustainable development and democracy by building networks among CSOs at national and regional level (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). It will ultimately strengthen European identity and the sense of belonging to Europe.***

Francophone Open Government in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia. €6 million project. Partners: CFI Media, National Assembly, ministries in charge of public and digital reforms

> ***This project is contributing to building networks among actors in democracy in various countries based on the principles of Open Government: transparency of public action, openness, and accountability of governments. It is establishing a framework for exchanges and consultation between the State and citizens. It is also promoting citizen participation, for example, for the participatory budget.***

Finally, there could be an elevator between these three levels: the network of Public Development Banks, which are major partners of AFD for sustainable development investments and perhaps also for substantive democracy in the future.

There are more than 500 Public Development Banks (PDBs) in all regions around the world, operating at sub-national, national, regional, international and multilateral levels. They have a generalist or specialized focus and support small and medium-sized enterprises, agriculture and food systems, housing, trade, infrastructure, etc. These banks have three attributes: (i) they are controlled by governments; (ii) they execute a public mandate focused on sustainable development; (iii) they enjoy independent legal status and financial and management autonomy. These banks have total assets estimated at $23 trillion and they provide $2.5 trillion of financing every year, more than 10% of the total amount of global investment, both public and private.

These actors are grouped and structured within clubs, such as the International Development Finance Club (IDFC), and a global Finance in Common (FiCS) network to pool their contribution to the climate, sustainability and development. These actors have strong potential for channeling global finance: upstream, through the leverage effect for concessional public resources, directly, by financing investments, and downstream, by mobilizing and channeling private finance and standards.

By channeling finance towards common goods, Public Development Banks contribute to a certain form of substantive democracy. They could probably go further, towards more direct support for democratic actors and innovations, if they are given the freedom, the mandate and the means.

Support for Public Development Banks: examples

Transformational credit line to the Development Bank of Rwanda (BRD). €20 million of financing. Partner: BRD. Start: 2022.

This project is strengthening BRD's position as a Public Development Bank, in line with the Government's mandate and objectives for the sector, and in particular priority sectors (energy, infrastructure, etc.).

Capacity building support for the Jordanian Cities and Villages Development Bank (CVDB). €500,000 of financing. Partner: CVDB. Start of the project: 2023.

The project aims to help CVDB play its full role as a development bank and adapt to a new legislative environment. This includes implementing a new investment strategy and mobilizing resources, strengthening the governance mechanism, and implementing a technical assistance mechanism for municipalities.

Credit line and technical assistance for the Corporacion Andina de Fomento (CAF). €200 million of financing. Partner: CAF. Multi-country Latin America. Start: 2023.

Financing aimed at fully mainstreaming climate issues into the action of the CAF, and mainstreaming gender issues, in order to support the creation of a Green Finance Group.

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Publishing director Rémy Rioux
Editor-in-chief Thomas Mélonio
Graphic design MeMo, Juliegilles, D. Cazeils
Layout PUB
Translation Samantha O'Connell

Legal deposit 2sd quarter 2024
ISSN 2680-5448 | **ISSN numérique** 2680-9214
Printed by the AFD reprographics department

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